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OPENING GATES: ELEVATING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY  
COMMUNICATION AND STRATEGIC PHILANTHROCAPITALISM FOR SOCIAL  
CHANGE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Beth E. Michalec

May 2020

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COMMUNICATION AND STRATEGIC PHILANTHROCAPITALISM FOR SOCIAL  
CHANGE

By

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Approved March 27, 2020

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## ABSTRACT

# OPENING GATES: ELEVATING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMUNICATION AND STRATEGIC PHILANTHROCAPITALISM FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

By

Beth E. Michalec

May 2020

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Ronald C. Arnett

In today's global marketplace, the Aristotelian notion of *philanthrôpía* manifests in myriad terms and meanings: corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, social entrepreneurship, venture capitalism and philanthrocapitalism, to name a few. Now, nonprofit organizations and foundations are building on the social and financial capital of successful business titans, such as Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Ted Turner, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, and others, to address ongoing and growing social issues of health, education, and poverty worldwide. This dissertation will explore the question: Is philanthrocapitalism the next paradigm to elevate global corporate social responsibility efforts? To answer this question, I draw on Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and undertake a constructive hermeneutic approach grounded in a textured understanding of philanthrocapitalism. Finally, I provide a case study analysis through

the lens of Judith Butler's work on performative agency that explores the history, strategic mission, and diverse programming initiatives of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. As the exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation endeavors to reduce inequity and generate sustainable positive social change without endangering global democracy and cultures.

## DEDICATION

“All you have to do is to pay attention; lessons always arrive when you are ready, and if you can read the signs, you will learn everything you need to know in order to take the next step.”— Paulo Coelho, *The Zahir*

For David and Darlene, my parents and lifelong teachers, who have given me roots to find my way home and wings to fly my own path. *Grazie mille.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The dissertation and journey to complete my doctoral degree has been the most demanding challenge of my academic career. This degree compelled me to dig deeply into myself, to draw on the unwavering support of family, close friends and trusted advisers, and, above all, to have faith and trust in my own resilience. Without the encouragement, grace, generosity of spirit, good humor, and insightful counsel of the following people, this project would not have been completed. I owe them my gratitude.

I would like to recognize my committee, Dr. Ronald C. Arnett, Dr. Janie Harden Fritz, and Dr. Craig T. Maier, and the entire faculty in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies. I am eternally grateful for the gift of my Italian adventure.

I appreciate the support of numerous colleagues and friends from institutions around the globe. Special thanks to Bob Wolfe for being a constant champion.

Kasey, KJ, JJ, Kristen, Liz, Jess, Shavonne, my AZD/BC community—you and yours are my family. Thank you for the laughter, encouragement, dinners and drinks, CBPs and workouts, and worldwide travel adventures. Where are we going next?

My deepest thanks to my family—mom, dad, Gina, Rob and T4—who cheer me on, pick me up, give me space, and always welcome me when country roads bring me home. Thank you for believing in me, and I look forward to welcoming Owen to our party soon. He is already so loved by his favorite auntie.

Lastly, I lovingly remember my grandparents, who would have gotten the biggest kick out of having a doctor in the family. As Grandma Wilma would have gleefully exclaimed, “you better believe it!”



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract .....	iv
Dedication .....	v
Acknowledgement .....	vi
Chapter 1 .....	1
Chapter 2 .....	26
Chapter 3 .....	60
Chapter 4 .....	103
Chapter 5 .....	166
References .....	204

## Chapter 1: Roots of Philanthropy

*Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone else planted a tree long ago.*

~Warren Buffett, *Forbes Magazine*<sup>1</sup>

Nonprofit organizations and social programs have long relied on building donor relationships and gaining financial support to execute programming and fulfill organizational missions. Yet in 2006, when Bill Gates and Warren Buffett separately announced donations from their personal wealth of \$31 billion and \$37 billion dollars, respectively, the tradition of corporate giving and charitable donations was radically shaken (Bishop and Green, 2008). Indeed, Gates's and Buffett's donations, and those of other business titans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, have reimaged a paradigm of giving that combines fiscal and social capital with a long-term goal to execute strategic initiatives with the potential to create transformative and sustainable social change on a global scale. This change, spurred by entrepreneurial vision and capital, has spurred a new movement termed *philanthrocapitalism*.

This project aims to contribute to the ongoing body of work within corporate communication scholarship and practice that examines the interplay between philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and the emergence of philanthrocapitalism. Corporate communication best functions at a management level within an organization and “offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable [*sic*] reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent”

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<sup>1</sup> Andersen, E. (2013, December 02). 23 Quotes from Warren Buffett on Life and Generosity. Retrieved December 30, 2015, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/erikaandersen/2013/12/02/23-quotes-from-warren-buffett-on-life-and-generosity/>

(Cornelissen, 2017, p. 5). An organization's reputation is its most vital and valuable asset, and the role of corporate communication, as both a discipline and in practice, is to build, protect and maintain organizational reputation (Cornelissen 2017). One strategic approach utilized within a corporate communication framework to build, protect and maintain an organization's reputation is corporate social responsibility (CSR).

While the phrase *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) was first introduced by Howard Bowen in his 1953 book titled, *Social Responsibilities of a Businessman*, no one guiding definition exists to characterize or identify the full scope of CSR as a corporate communication strategy. Within corporate communication, CSR often functions as a strategy or coordinate to build engagement, to highlight an ethical commitment to a movement or a cause, and/or to shape and encourage reputational value. As Villagra, Cárda, and Ruiz San Román (2016) suggest, CSR is

usually defined to reflect the necessity of reconciling corporate development with ethical, social and environmental aspects...[and] these initiatives can take many shapes, such as policies with providers, policies to reduce environmental impact, social programs, sponsorships, corporate volunteering, and cause-related marketing (p. 134).

Importantly, many organizations incorporate CSR in their overall corporate communication strategic planning and programs to build positive public perceptions and image, as well as overall organizational reputation (Villagra, Cárda, and Ruiz San Román, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006). The broad understanding of CSR is thus enacted and engaged by organizations in myriad ways to build, protect, and maintain the relationships and reputation to generate ongoing brand value.

The heart of this project attends to the rising power of the millennial consumer and employee base who demand corporate social responsibility and its effective communication to both internal and external stakeholders. Dubbed the “CSR Generation” in the 2015 Millennial CSR Study conducted by Cone Communications, “millennials are universally more engaged in corporate social responsibility efforts.” Furthermore, the study concluded “more than nine in 10 millennials would switch brands to one associated with a cause (91% vs. 85% U.S. average) and two thirds use social media to engage around CSR (66% vs. 53% U.S. average)” (Cone Communications, 2015).

Moreover, engaging the millennial stakeholder audiences requires not only social media, but an effective mixed media approach that includes traditional tactics, such as packaging and annual reports, as well as digital strategies that include web, video, and social media content. Ultimately, this project is situated within the corporate communication discipline and attempts to reframe the classical understanding of philanthropy within organizations as corporate social responsibility, providing the fulcrum to pivot toward philanthrocapitalism in the marketplace.

The guiding metaphor of philanthrocapitalism is grounded in the twin notions of philanthropy (individually) and corporate social responsibility (organizationally). The movement to philanthrocapitalism is linked to what Sisodia, Wolfe and Sheth (2016) term the Age of Transcendence, which “signifies a cultural watershed in which the physical (materialistic) influences that dominated culture in the twentieth century ebb while metaphysical (experiential) influences become stronger” (xxix).

Furthermore, philanthrocapitalism acknowledges the reality that governments and advocacy groups can no longer be solely responsible for addressing expanding social problems and aging population issues; it is now an era of individual duty and organizational responsibility. Moreover, philanthrocapitalists possess a wellspring of financial resources that permit them to take greater risks and face more vulnerability than governments and other agencies. The social and marketplace conditions have called forth a response from business leaders and entrepreneurs to help identify and implement solutions for major social, cultural, educational, and healthcare reforms devised, funded, and executed by private enterprise for a greater public good.

First, the classical definition of philanthropy is understood through the Greek term *philanthrôpía* and then repositioned organizationally under the term *corporate social responsibility* (CSR). This movement from philanthropy to corporate social responsibility mirrors the movement from individual to organizational giving within the public sphere. Today, CSR functions as a strategic component of corporate communication, both internally and externally. Internal structures include an organization's mission and identity statements and guiding values, while external structures include deliberate programming initiatives, communication tactics, overall reputation management and "good works" undertaken by organizations within communities.

Then, utilizing an interpretive hermeneutic approach to understand philanthrocapitalism, the project endeavors to comprehend the current marketplace environment that has permitted, arguably compelled, philanthrocapitalism to emerge. By understanding the duality of individual and organizational giving in light of the

relationships between internal and external communication strategies and tactics, an opportunity occurs to analyze the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in later chapters.

Overall, this project aims to contribute to the ongoing body of corporate communication scholarship related to corporate social responsibility and philanthrocapitalism, while also providing coordinates for future practitioner application in nonprofit development. This chapter examines the development of metaphors—*philanthropy* and *corporate social responsibility*—to ground synthetic movement through the individual to the organizational levels of analysis from which *philanthrocapitalism* emerges. This exploration responds to the corporate communication understandings of mission, identity, and reputation in light of the query: what will you do for others?

### **Classical Beginnings**

*Philanthrôpía* emerged as a composite term during the 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek Enlightenment in Aeschylus' tragic drama *Prometheus Bound* and later in Aristophanes' *Peace* (Sulek, 2010, p. 387). Both literary usages describe the giving of gifts and self-sacrifices, but with contrasting end results. Prometheus, a Titan whose name means 'forethought,' is brutally killed on Zeus's order as punishment for stealing fire and giving it to mankind (Aeschylus, 1961, lines 7-11; Sulek, 2010, p. 387). Prometheus is harshly rebuked by one of his executioners who says, "Your kindness to the human race has earned you this [*toiaut' epêurô tou philanthrôpou trôpou*]" (Aeschylus, 1961, lines 28-30; Sulek, 2010, p. 387). The kindness Prometheus offered, giving fire to humans without regard for his own well-being, and the ensuing punishment he faced, reinforces the sacrificial element of philanthropy as a sense of giving or doing for others with little or no regard to self.

While generally credited to Aeschylus, there is considerable evidence (Griffith, 1977) that *Prometheus Bound* may, in fact, have been authored later by a less widely known author, perhaps Aeschylus' son, Euphorion (West, 1990, pp. 67-72) later during the Greek Enlightenment. This time period gave rise to Pericles and his close advisor Protagoras, who features in Plato's Socratic dialogue of the same name (Sulek, 2010, p. 388). However, before Plato's *Protagoras*, Aristophanes' comedy titled *Peace* (421 BCE) utilized the term *philanthrôpía* in an adjectival form "to flatter a god so as to receive divine favor in the future, as opposed to by Olympian gods to reprimand a Titan [Prometheus] for past transgressions" (Sulek, 2010, p. 389). Together, these two usages of the term *philanthrôpía* provide a framework rooted in giving and sacrifice, but also allude to the potentiality for a darker side of philanthropy, particularly in how the gifts are procured by the givers and used by the benefactors.

As the Greek city-state expanded, the notion of *philanthrôpía* took root in a more politically driven fashion to highlight desired leadership qualities for the ultimate good of the polis. Plato's *Symposium* illustrates this when Aristophanes and Socrates compete to best eulogize Eros, the god of love. In his opening statement, Aristophanes extolls Eros as "the most philanthropic [*philanthrôpôtatos*] of gods, a helper of human beings as well as a physician dealing with an illness the healing of which would result in the greatest happiness of for the human race" (Plato, 2001, 189c-189d).

Additionally, Plato's *Euthyphro* demonstrates the movement to the noun form of *philanthrôpía* when Socrates, standing on the steps to court before his arraignment and eventual condemnation to death, engages in a dialogue that culminates in answer to the question: what is piety? The use of *philanthrôpía* in answering the question reinforces the

movement to the noun form of the word, while also imbuing the word with a philosophical component that would springboard its adoption and use in learning institutions founded by Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle.

The promise of fundamental knowledge and skills in philosophy and rhetoric attracted wealthy Greek students to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. During this robust time, Aristotle frequently used the word *philanthrôpía* within his "philosophical treatises on aesthetics, ethics, politics, and natural science" to trigger a cathartic [*catharsis*] emotional release for the audience, particularly within *Poetics* (Sulek, 2010, p. 394). Perhaps most powerfully, Aristotle uses *philanthrôpía* within his *Nicomachean Ethics* to describe, "...why we praise friends of humanity [*philanthrô pous*]. And in our travels, we can see how every human being is akin and beloved to a human being" (Aristotle, 1985, 1155a). This inclusion, though only mentioned once, inherently connects friendship and virtue, one human to another, in a cosmopolitan worldview.

The Classical modes of *philanthrôpía* can be categorized according to different usages: theological<sup>2</sup>, philosophical, political, ontological, and social (Sulek, 2010, p. 396), and through philosophy, becomes nearly synonymous with *paedeía*, the deliberate cultivation of the ideal Greek citizen through education and cultural edification in an effort to embody the highest virtues of the polis (Jaeger, 1945; Sulek, 2010, p. 396). By virtue of *philanthrôpía*'s connection to *paedeía*, a powerful thread can be traced to the Humanities, "...the broader area of shared beliefs, knowledge and values that formed the basis for broad deliberations—not only about policy issues, but about issues of

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<sup>2</sup> Theologically, philanthropy has been expressed through the ideas of charity and giving. The three major monotheistic faith perspectives—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—entreat believers and practitioners of their faiths to give in myriad ways, though most notably through tithing, time, and talents, as a way to enact the faith (Fleishman, 2007, pp 46-47).



significance and relevance to the collectivity” or public sphere of communication and culture (Buxton 2009, pp. 2-3) that is shaped by and simultaneously shapes today’s organizational marketplace landscape.

### **Modern Philanthropy**

*Philanthrôpía* seemingly vanished from the public sphere as the Greek language nearly disappeared following the fall of the Western Roman Empire until the beginning of The Italian Renaissance (Sulek, 2009, p. 194). Sulek (2009) depicts this time period as the “Dark Ages” during which the notion of *philanthrôpía* became integrated into the Old English language ontologically “to describe plants whose seeds stick rather too readily to people” (p. 194). This botanical meaning would continue to exist as the primary understanding of *philanthrôpía* for over one hundred years until returning to a more Classical mode of interpretation.

The first modern use of *philanthrôpía* to connect humanity and goodness akin to Aristotle’s explication emerged in a collection of essays written by Sir Francis Bacon in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. While the term *philanthrôpía* was used only once in the 1612 essay titled “On Goodness and Goodness of Nature,” Bacon links *philanthrôpía* inherently with goodness for and toward humanity through the active habits of doing (Sulek, 2009, pp. 194-194). Bacon writes, “I take goodness in this sense, the affecting of the weal of men, which is that the Grecians call *philanthrôpía*; and the word *humanity* (as it is used) is a little too light to express it” (Bacon & Pitcher, 1985 p. 96).

Bacon’s reintegration of *philanthrôpía* within the English lexicon, as derived from the classical roots, can be traced etymologically and through Western literature throughout much of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, it was Noah Webster’s

American dictionary project, generated during the late 1700s to the mid-1800s, that first introduced the modern notion of *philanthropy* within American culture and society (Sulek, 2009, p. 197). Webster (1989) included the word *philanthropy* in his first dictionary publication in 1828 and defined it as “the love of mankind; benevolence towards the whole human family; universal good will. It differs from friendship, as the latter is an affection for individuals” (Sulek, 2009, p. 197). Webster’s definition of philanthropy as separate from friendship was a notable designation.

Moving beyond inclusion in Webster’s dictionary, *philanthropy* was powerfully included in Alexander Hamilton’s *Federalist Papers* almost as a call-to-action akin to patriotism (Sulek, 2009, p. 197). The ongoing development of philanthropy with benevolence toward humanity similarly aligned with Kant’s Enlightenment work that moves the notion of *philanthropy* from an active habit of virtue-based ethics to a deontological basis required to fulfill the “moral imperative of duty” (Sulek, 2009, p. 197), thus connecting the classical and emerging social and cultural contexts that positioned philanthropy as a tool of industrialism during the American Progressive Era of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Moreover, the ideals of American philanthropy are perhaps best described not in iterative modes, but through expression. Fleishman (2007) suggests,

the word *expressive* is exactly the right one to describe most American philanthropy. First, it’s prompted by Americans’ desire to express support for something larger than themselves. Second, it reflects our freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights...Thus, expressive giving is both crucial to our not-for-profit sector and an essentially American activity (p. 48).

The expressive means of philanthropy gave rise to the creation of large private foundations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fleishman, 2007, p. 267), which are highlighted by two of the wealthiest, and most divisive, Progressive Era philanthropists: Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, Sr.

Andrew Carnegie, hailed as one of the most powerful industrialists and entrepreneurs of the 20th century, believed in philanthropy as a way to address rising social problems that stemmed from booming industrialization. In the landmark 1889 essay “Wealth,” later published as *The Gospel of Wealth*, Carnegie wrote, “the problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship.” Notably, Carnegie devoted his philanthropic giving to the establishment of over 2,000 public libraries, Carnegie Hall in New York, and numerous educational and research institutions, especially in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and surrounding areas (Fleishman, 2007, xii; Columbia University Libraries, 2018; Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, & Shaw, June 2011, pp. 433-435).

Similarly, John D. Rockefeller Sr., Carnegie’s contemporary as an oil magnate, founded the Standard Oil Company in Cleveland, Ohio in 1870, and created a monopoly by purchasing rival refineries and developing global distribution companies (Fleishman, 2007; Friedman & MacGarvie, 2002, p. 226). In 1892, when the monopolistic Standard Oil Company was eventually dissolved as a result of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, Rockefeller drew inspiration from Carnegie’s philanthropic activities (Fleishman, 2007; Friedman & MacGarvie, 2002, p. 47).

Rockefeller eventually donated more than half a billion dollars to scientific, educational and religious causes, established the University of Chicago, and the

Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research under the banner of the Rockefeller Foundation (Fleishman, 2007; Friedman & MacGarvie, 2002). However, the creation of the Rockefeller Foundation sprung not from Rockefeller's devotion to philanthropy, but more to "spare him the overwhelming burden of overseeing donations to worthy causes" (Friedman & MacGarvie, 2002, p. 47). Rockefeller modeled his philanthropic foundation in ways that mirrored his business model by appointing a professional adviser to oversee the programming and donations Rockefeller sponsored.

While Carnegie, Rockefeller and their contemporaries in the Progressive Era created long-lasting impact through their philanthropic efforts, many of these men are also largely responsible for creating working and environmental conditions considered hazardous. In many instances, Carnegie's philanthropy was viewed not as a form of goodwill, but as an effort at crisis management and image restoration following outcry within the steel industry and neighboring communities, especially in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Columbia University Libraries, 2018). Rockefeller and Standard Oil were often the targets of muckraking journalists who worked to expose the poor working conditions and corrupt business practices (Friedman & MacGarvie, 2002, p. 47). Moreover, both men and their companies were monopolistic and faced significant repercussions with the Congressional passing of the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 (Fleishman, 2007; Friedman & MacGarvie, 2002, p. 47).

Because of Carnegie and Rockefeller's contributions, or perhaps despite their business practices, many of the large-scale philanthropic gifts they provided continue to benefit humankind today. Nevertheless, the Classical understanding of *philanthrôpía* that informed modern *philanthropy* was perhaps tainted in the Industrial Age of Carnegie and

Rockefeller, but now is arguably being reimagined and implemented through corporate social responsibility, and more globally, as philanthrocapitalism. These movements from the individual to the organizational levels of philanthropy can benefit from a hermeneutic research approach to understand the current marketplace climate and global philanthropic initiatives.

Historically, organizational studies have typically been steeped in social scientific research; however, scholars in the field have been calling attention to the importance of balancing research perspectives and valuing contributions from the Humanities. These scholars, who brought early attention to disparity in research (Mitroff, 1972, 1975; Van Maanen 1979; Dandridge, Mitroff, & Joyce, 1980), continue to speak of the salience of interpretive inquiry (Van Maanen, 1995; Alpaslan, Babb, Green, & Mitroff, 2006).

Interpretive research is further gaining recognition with the salience of communication (Cheney, 2000; Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2004; Cheney & Lair, 2005; Arnett, 2010; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Vásquez & Cooren, 2013), which opens pathways for new considerations of human relations in organizational studies.

In understanding the historical progression of philanthropy, Sulek (2009, p. 204) provides a framework that synthesizes and categorizes various forms of philanthropy:

**Literal:** Encompassing references to the literal meaning of philanthropy in ancient Greek as the love of mankind.

**Archaic:** For usages now considered largely obsolete, such as those referring to philanthropy as the “love of God for humankind” or as being synonymous with “humanity.”

**Ideal:** To describe the attainment of ideal aims, goals, outcomes, or objectives in terms of meeting a need, attaining a good, and/or advancing human happiness and well-being.

**Ontological:** To describe an innate desire, moral sentiment, psychological predisposition, or other such aspect of human nature that impels people to want to help others.

**Volitional:** To describe the good will, intent, or readiness to voluntarily help others.

**Actual:** To describe an objective act, such as giving of money, time, or effort, to a charitable cause or public purpose.

**Social:** To describe a relation, movement, organization, or other such social entity larger than the individual that embodies an explicitly defined charitable cause or good.

Sulek's (2009, p. 204) framework not only clarifies the definitional implications that exist, but also demonstrates the movement from the ancient Greek *philanthrôpía* (the literal meaning as love of mankind) to the more recognized, general term *philanthropy* (according to the ontological, volitional, actual, and social forms of giving, volunteering, and doing "good works").

By classifying the different ways philanthropy occurs, Sulek (2009, p. 204) positions the movement of philanthropy from the individual to the organizational levels of analysis, execution, and implication that permit the pivot to corporate social responsibility in organizational settings embedded within corporate communication strategies and tactics. This textured understanding and the movement of *philanthrôpía* to

*philanthropy* may have been lost in the Industrial Age of Carnegie and Rockefeller, but now through interpretive inquiry, presents great opportunity to understand corporate social responsibility and the shift to philanthrocapitalism in today's global marketplace.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

With the rise and empowerment of millennial audiences, as both consumers and employees, a resounding demand for transparency, accountability, and corporate “good works” has both forced and forged significant marketplace shifts and practices.

Through corporate communication channels, organizations can no longer simply argue their corporate strength and marketplace position as “doing well” in a profits and losses ledger or spreadsheet; stakeholders now demand that organizations also inherently work to “do good” for the environment, the communities, and the world. Both academic and marketplace research confirm this imperative. According to the 2017 Cone Communications CSR Study, research

confirms that seven in 10 Americans believe companies have an obligation to take actions to improve issues—even ones that may not be relevant to everyday business operations...Eighty-seven percent [of Americans sampled] said they'd purchase a product because that company advocated for an issue they cared about—and more than three-quarters (76%) would refuse to purchase a product if they found out a company supported an issue contrary to their beliefs.

In short, stakeholders' growing focus and ongoing priorities have shifted to what Elkington (1999) identified as the “triple bottom line” that prioritizes social (people), environmental (planet), and strong financial accounts (profits), respectively.

Various models of stakeholder relationship management highlight the importance of the triple bottom line of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which many practitioners also identify interchangeably as corporate citizenship. While corporate social responsibility as a term was first introduced in 1953 by Howard Bowen, lauded by many as the “Father of Corporate Social Responsibility” (Carroll, 1999, p. 291) in his landmark text titled *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, nearly 40 definitions for corporate social responsibility currently exist (Dahlsrud, 2006), and no one abiding definition has been embraced either academically or in marketplace practice.

Moreover, many of the definitions that have emerged are “often biased toward specific interests and thus prevent the development and implementations of the concept” (Van Marrewijk, 2012, p. 95). Nonetheless, a definition of corporate citizenship from The World Economic Forum (2003-2006) offers a starting point to understand the multiple stakeholder relationships potentially affected by corporate social responsibility. According to The World Economic Forum’s Global Citizenship Initiative (2006),

corporate citizenship is about the contribution a company makes to society through its core business activities, its social investment and philanthropy programmes [*sic*], and its engagement in public policy. The manner in which a company manages its economic, social and environmental relationships, and the way it engages with its stakeholders (such as shareholders, employees, customers, business partners, governments and communities), has an impact on the company’s long-term success.

Nevertheless, the definition of corporate citizenship from the World Economic Forum is met with academic and practitioner skepticism. Both scholars and practitioners have



increasingly favored “the more specific and descriptive concepts of corporate social responsibility...that appeal[s] to business organizations to deliver wider societal value beyond shareholder and market value alone” (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 255). Thus, a more encompassing term of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) is preferred.

While first introduced by Bowen in 1953, CSR was broadly defined in 2002 as “the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large” (Holme & Watts as qtd. in Cornelissen, 2017, p. 255). This definition considers the far-reaching scope of CSR, including overall brand value and opportunities an organization can create and contribute to communities and society as a whole.

Furthermore, the broad definition Holme & Watts provided in 2002 provides space for the CSR efforts to organically fit within an organization’s mission, values and vision that undergird its symbolic identity. Importantly, CSR efforts must be effectively communicated to an organization’s stakeholders, both internal and external, to foster awareness, engagement, and transparency. The goal of CSR communication is, in part, to alleviate questions of authenticity and transparency, though stakeholders might question the CSR activities and communication if not inherently aligned with the key identity points. Villagra, Cárada, and Ruiz San Román (2016) further explain, “communicating CSR actions does not always translate into positive public perception(s) but can occasionally engender rejection or skepticism” (p. 134).

To explicate the CSR efforts, Dahlsrud (2006) analyzed multiple functions of CSR and categorized the findings among five dimensions of corporate social

responsibility and the linguistic phrases often used in corporate, organizational and interpersonal communication. Dahlsrud's (2006, p. 4) work is included below in Table 1.

Dimensions	The definition is coded to the dimension if it refers to	Example phrases
The environmental dimension	The natural environment	'a cleaner environment' 'environmental stewardship' 'environmental concerns in business operations' 'contribute to a better society'
The social dimension	The relationship between business and society	'integrate social concerns in their business operations' 'consider the full scope of their impact on communities'
The economic dimension	Socio-economic or financial aspects, including describing CSR in terms of a business operation	'contribute to economic development' 'preserving the profitability' 'business operations'
The stakeholder dimension	Stakeholders or stakeholder groups	'interaction with their stakeholders' 'how organizations interact with their employees, suppliers, customers and communities'
The voluntariness dimension	Actions not prescribed by law	'treating the stakeholders of the firm' 'based on ethical values' 'beyond legal obligations' 'voluntary'

**Table 1**

*Five Dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility (Dahlsrud, 2006, p. 4)*

Dahlsrud's (2006) work, presented in Table 1, highlights the widely expected and accepted dimensions of corporate social responsibility at work within the corporate communication field today. The most widely based programming activities related to the CSR initiatives (dimensions) that Dahlsrud (2006) categorizes can be further explicated as follows: 1. environmental protection, conservation and stewardship; 2. the guiding notion that an action or program is implemented for the betterment of society at large; 3. an economic strategy to preserve and promote the sustainability of an organization without whose existence the "good works" of the CSR activities cannot be enacted; 4. the stakeholder perspective that is used for engagement to build, protect and maintain relationships and overall reputation and brand value; and finally, 5. volunteerism wherein organizations act not to fulfill a legal obligation, but as a matter of "doing good" because it is the "right" thing to do in order to support the ethical and moral values of an organization's guiding mission, values and vision.

Despite Dahlsrud's categories, there has been a lack of clarity about what constitutes CSR. This has challenged organizations as they work to attend to the stakeholder demand for greater CSR-based activities, transparency and effective communication. Chaudhri (2016) writes, "Fueled by concerns for transparency and the need to build trust and confidence of stakeholders, CSR communication and reporting has become a mainstream management function" within corporate communication strategies and practices (pp. 419-420).

Companies now include CSR-related activities in their corporate communication strategies to build, protect and maintain their reputation with stakeholders. Villagra, Cárdena, and Ruiz San Román (2016) note, "companies now include in their

communications information related to ethical values and responsible behavior, in the hope of improving brand reputation and public recognition” (p. 134). Yet, a challenge remains to ensure that corporate social responsibility, both as an organizational philosophy and practice, aligns with the overall mission, vision, and values that are the bedrock of an organization.

The alignment of CSR and an organization’s defining identity markers (mission, vision and values), often described as “fit,” is vital to prevent the corporate communication sins of “spin” and “greenwashing” (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 257). By making sure CSR initiatives and programs strategically align with the key identity elements that give an organization its symbolic soul (mission, values, vision) and connects organically with the organization’s stakeholder groups, organizations can ethically integrate strategic CSR programs, tactics, and activities that both respond to and engage the stakeholders’ calls for corporate “good works.”

The practice of corporate communication is rooted in building trust and fostering relationships between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders. CSR is one strategic element that organizations utilize to build that engagement and trust. However, the credibility and integrity of the organization’s CSR efforts and communications are viewed much more favorably when shared by sources not controlled by the company (Arthur W. Page Society, 2012; Skard & Thorbjørnsen, 2014; Swaen & Vanhamme, 2005). Therefore, by removing the institutional bias generated when a company self-reports, stakeholders have a higher level of trust for the organization, which further elevates its credibility and overall brand reputation.

While corporate social responsibility emerged largely in response to stakeholder

demand, it is only successful when stakeholder actions and public opinion work in tandem. Much like Carnegie's use of philanthropy, CSR initially began as a function of public relations (PR) as organizations looked to it as a tool for image restoration after a crisis to tout the "good works" of an organization and distract attention away from or lessen the damage of other maligning issues. As public relations—and now corporate communication—became synergistically aligned with and part of strategic management efforts, CSR became an intrinsic component of organizational identity, internally, and reputation, externally (Carroll, 1999; Cornelissen, 2017). This shift further validated the integration of CSR beyond a PR function within corporate communication and further recognized CSR's strategic value within the whole of an organization's identity and reputation as constructed through corporate communication strategies and practices.

### **Philanthrocapitalism**

With the 2006 publication of "The Birth of Philanthrocapitalism" as a special report from Matthew Bishop in *The Economist*, a new term entered the lexicon of philanthropy in the public sphere: *philanthrocapitalism*. Bishop and Green (2008; 2015), however, suggest that philanthrocapitalism was first enacted in 1997 when Ted Turner, billionaire founder of CNN, pledged \$1 billion to support a variety of United Nations initiatives. Turner, months earlier, had publicly chastised billionaires, such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, for not giving more to charity. Gates and Buffett, in turn, pledged to give away most of their wealth in 2006 via the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and again, in 2010, by creating the Giving Pledge, "a commitment to be signed by billionaires promising to give away at least half of the wealth by the time of their death" (Bishop &

Green, 2008; 2015). As of June 2015, the number of billionaires who had signed the Giving Pledge numbered 137 worldwide (Bishop & Green, 2015).

By giving vast amounts of money to social causes, these successful entrepreneurs harkened back to Carnegie's initial ideas in *The Gospel of Wealth*. Characterized by large donations and strategic partnerships, philanthrocapitalism is an effort to use private wealth to address ongoing public and social concerns. Bishop and Green (2015) explain,

At its broadest, the term [philanthrocapitalism] refers to the growing role for private sector actors in addressing the biggest social and environmental challenges facing the planet. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century has unfolded, it has become increasingly accepted, and even expected, that wealthy philanthropists, businesses, charities and social entrepreneurs will take part in and even lead efforts to solve big problems, especially when those solutions require innovation and entrepreneurship. The rise of social media and online campaigning has enabled every citizen to take part, too, by becoming more engaged in finding and demanding solutions to these problems (pp. 541-542).

As a discursive resource (Kuhn et al., 2008), philanthrocapitalism guides notions of giving among billionaires who have resources to address major social issues with innovative solutions that create not only social change, but also a heightened sense of global citizenship.

Chief among the arguments in support of the philanthrocapitalist movement is the potential to engage critical thinking skills to innovatively create and implement solutions to many of the world's biggest social problems through giving, investing and advocacy in ways that many governments simply do not have the resources or latitude to enact

(Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015). Simply put, those who advocate for philanthrocapitalism do so on the basis of potential impact.

Nevertheless, philanthrocapitalism faces strong criticism. Arguments exist about the continuing rise of financial inequality in global economies and whether philanthrocapitalists can deliver the large-scale solutions promised. Similarly, critics point to the historical lack of philanthropic sustainability, discourses of impermanence and difference (Kuhn et al., 2008, pp. 166-167), that many foundations or other cause-related initiatives encounter after the initial champion(s) are gone, as well as the ongoing difficulty of measuring success via clear metrics (Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015). Furthermore, Bishop & Green (2008; 2015) identified three specific risks have come to light that could damage the good that philanthrocapitalists envision:

1. War and conflict that cause political and economic institutions to collapse;
2. Politically-driven agendas that diminish capital resources; and
3. Lack of success that could lead to a crisis of confidence and diminishing support.

The support and criticisms connected to philanthrocapitalism create an ongoing push-pull dichotomy that has the potential to create great social change or mire ongoing global issues with continued and escalating challenges. This push-pull engagement of philanthrocapitalism is highlighted by a case study of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in forthcoming chapters.

## **Implications**

Situating and understanding the classical beginnings of philanthropy through the term *philanthrôpía* as an individual undertaking grounds the development of



philanthropy, both individually and organizationally. Moreover, the classical grounding of philanthropy provides an entrance point to examine modern philanthropy and a movement to explicate corporate social responsibility (CSR) organizationally within the framework of corporate communication.

Tracing the development of philanthrôpía to philanthropy, then to corporate social responsibility, and ultimately, to philanthrocapitalism, is important for corporate communication as both scholars and practitioners attempt to understand and engage diverse and dynamic audiences, particularly millennial consumers and employees, to enact and communicate effective large-scale social changes.

Furthermore, contextualizing philanthrocapitalism within a corporate communication framework permits a pivot to understand how philanthrocapitalists, such as Gates, Buffett, Turner, Zuckerberg, Bezos, and others, are combining financial capital, social influence, and entrepreneurial vision with key stakeholder engagement and involvement to work toward a long-term goal and execute strategic initiatives for sustainable social change on a global scale.

Philanthrocapitalism, and its positioning in both the marketplace and academia, is not without pitfalls, and its programming has experienced setbacks, which will be examined in subsequent chapters. Ultimately, this project is situated within the corporate communication discipline and attempts to contribute to the classical understanding of philanthropy within organizations through the metaphor itself and the corporate communication strategy of corporate social responsibility.

Finally, this project leans into questions surrounding philanthrocapitalist efforts as a challenge to traditional corporate social responsibility, grounded in corporate

communication, to generate sustainable positive social change without endangering global democracy. The following chapters provide a framework to explore the project's guiding metaphors—philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and philanthrocapitalism—through the lens of Jürgen Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action*.

The inclusion of Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* will be integrated to understand and align the corporate communication strategies that catalyzed, and have now solidified, the growing movement of philanthropy to corporate social responsibility, which permits the pivot to philanthrocapitalism, and the emergence of a case study about the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The case study exploring the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will be positioned within a larger conversation of corporate communication strategies and tactics as philanthrocapitalism in action. One goal of philanthrocapitalism is to engage the large and powerful consumer group of millennials and partners who, through their corporate communication conversations with brands and nonprofit organizations, not only support CSR-based and philanthrocapitalistic brands and strategic programming, but actively seek opportunities to build relationships. The mighty millennials seemingly want to create relationships with brands, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholder audiences who seem to share an ongoing commitment to undertaking and communicating across various channels about philanthrocapitalist initiatives, programs and activities for sustainable global change.

## Chapter 2: Understanding Corporate Social Responsibility & Philanthrocapitalism

via

### Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action

*No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world.*

~Robin Williams, *Dead Poets Society*<sup>3</sup>

Discerning the ways for- and nonprofit organizations build a shared sense of meaning that promotes and motivates action within the marketplace requires keen insight and understanding of the 5Ws and H: who, what, where, when, why and how. Arguably, the most important question lies in the *why*. The *why* informs “every instruction we give, every course of action set, every result we desire” that leads to every decision made (Sinek, 2013, p. 15). The call to answer the question of *why* functions not only as the cornerstone within a strategic marketplace understanding of an organization’s mission, values and vision, but also as a scholarly beckoning for a theoretical framework, a grounding of evidence that elucidates, validates, and textures the *why* that functions as a philosophy of communication (Arnett, Fritz, & Bell, 2008; 2018, pp. 16-18).

Keeping *why* at the forefront of all organizational activity, via a clear mission, values and vision, allows an organization’s *what* (strategies) and *how* (tactics) to be more effectively aligned and executed, creating and reinforcing long-term stakeholder relationships, sustainability and marketplace success (Sinek, 2013; Arnett, Fritz, & Bell, 2008, 2018, p. 33). Guided by the inherent need to respond to the question *why*, this chapter delves into Jürgen Habermas’s theory of communicative action as a communication paradigm grounding and exploring the communicative connections to corporate social responsibility permitting the emergence of philanthrocapitalism.

Examining Habermas's theory of communicative action related to corporate social responsibility and philanthrocapitalism, this chapter contributes to the scholarship and practice of corporate communication by understanding the notion of how a shared sense of meaning, rooted in rationality and pragmatics, can develop to spark marketplace actions and change.

Habermas draws on a classical understanding of rhetoric and rational communication derived from Aristotle<sup>4</sup> and Cicero<sup>5</sup>, centering around the emergence of the best argument “with the aim of coming to an agreement about the validity or invalidity of the problematic claims” (McCarthy, 1978, p. 292). Habermas frames this around the idea of consensus. Moreover, while Habermas's roots are firmly planted in the Enlightenment's soil of reason and rationality, he is best known among rhetoric scholars for his theory of universal pragmatics (Habermas, 1979; Herrick, 2005, p. 238).

Habermas's considerations of language and mutual understanding drive a shift from the universal absolutes of the Enlightenment and forge a new direction in his thinking that places an ongoing emphasis on pragmatics and practical application. As such, Habermas conceives his theory of communicative action as a rational procedure of communicative exchanges and interactions used to generate mutual understanding. The emphasis on mutual understanding, or consensus, is the thread weaving Habermas's theory of communicative action together with corporate social responsibility and

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<sup>3</sup> Buena Vista Pictures Distribution. (1989). *Dead Poets Society* (motion picture).

<sup>4</sup> For Aristotle, rhetoric is “the faculty of discovering in any particular case all of the available means of persuasion” (Bizzell and Herzberg, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> For Cicero, rhetoric is comprised of invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and pronunciation and is speech created for persuasion (Bizzell and Herzberg, 2001).

philanthrocapitalism situated within corporate communication and the marketplace.

First, the development of Habermas's thinking is established through his background and education as a critical theorist in Germany's Frankfurt School (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). The experiences shaping Habermas's understanding of critical theory and his own unique engagement undergird his philosophical identity, facilitating his pivot to pragmatics. In time, Habermas's interests in pragmatics and language lead to his creation of the theory of communicative action as a communication paradigm.

Next, the theory of communicative action is explicated through two fundamental metaphors: the public sphere and lifeworld. Drawing on the public sphere and lifeworld creates a hermeneutic entrance point to the theory of communicative action as a communication paradigm. As a communication paradigm, the theory of communicative action provides a framework of rational communicative engagement, accountability and understanding resulting in a shared sense of meaning interwoven through corporate communication application in the marketplace. Thus, consensus, or the shared sense of meaning resulting from the theory of communicative action, offers an opportunity to explore corporate social responsibility and the movement toward philanthrocapitalism.

Overall, this chapter aims to contribute to the ongoing body of corporate communication scholarship by offering considerations of corporate social responsibility and philanthrocapitalism grounded by Habermas's theory of communicative action. Additionally, practical implications connected to corporate social responsibility and philanthrocapitalism become apparent in corporate communication connections to nonprofit organizations relying on stakeholder buy-in and commitment to mission, values and vision, to enact programming and create change. The stakeholder buy-in and

commitment are created through a shared sense of meaning and understanding, what Habermas terms “consensus,” thus exemplifying the tenets of the theory of communicative action on both an individual and organizational level.

The explorations presented in this chapter respond to the corporate communication coordinates prioritized by stakeholder relationship management—particularly those devoted to an organization’s mission and corporate social responsibility—requiring stakeholders to embrace, enact, and advocate for the shared sense of meaning emerging to answer the ongoing question of *why*. Furthermore, by understanding Habermas’s theory of communicative action—situated within the metaphors of the public sphere and lifeworld where rational discourse takes place via speech acts—as a rational process upheld by exchanging validity claims, communicative agents engage in discourse to arrive at a consensus or a shared sense of meaning. Consequently, Habermas’s theory of communicative action and consensus invite corporate communication scholars and practitioners to more nimbly navigate corporate social responsibility communication and practices. In sum, Habermas provides philosophical and communicative frameworks to understand and work within the historical moment and communicative practices that permitted philanthrocapitalism to emerge within the global marketplace.

### **Habermas’s Early Development**

Jürgen Habermas was born in 1929 near Düsseldorf, Germany, and he was only 10 years old when World War II broke out in 1939. Habermas was deeply affected by World War II and the Nuremberg Trials that demonstrated the moral and political failures of National Socialism (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). The events and failures led Habermas

to study philosophy at the Universities of Göttingen and Bonn (Heath, 2003; Herrick, 2005; Bohman and Regh, 2014) and taught at the Universities of Heidelberg and Frankfurt during the 1960s and 1970s (Herrick, 2005). In 1971, Habermas became the second director of the Max Planck Institute (Herrick, 2005; Cherem).

As a scholar, Habermas is identified as a member of Germany's Frankfurt School<sup>6</sup> of Critical Theory. The Frankfurt School is largely considered to be a close circle of academics operating within the confines of critical theory guided by the humanistic tradition of Enlightenment rationality, a Marxist critique of capitalism and Freud's psychology (Wiggershaus, 2007; Müller-Doohm, 2017, pp. 252-253; 265-270). Yet, some scholars identify distinctively unique pathways of thought that separate and diverge among the philosophers and intellectuals typically included in that particular canon (Wiggershaus, 2007; Müller-Doohm, 2017, pp. 252-253; 265-270). In fact, noteworthy Frankfurt School scholar Wiggershaus (2007) goes so far as to suggest that the label of "The Frankfurt School" was externally contrived and does not actually represent a "unified paradigm" (as described by Kuhn, 1996) emergent from one centralized intellectual tradition (Wiggershaus, 2007).

Additionally, based on Habermas's later works centered around language and communicative action, Müller-Doohm (2017) posits that Habermas's critical theory does not dwell in "negativity of existence: its conditions of possibility result from the

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<sup>6</sup> "The Frankfurt School, known more appropriately as Critical Theory, is a philosophical and sociological movement spread across many universities around the world. It was originally located at the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*), an attached institute at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. The Institute was founded in 1923 thanks to a donation by Felix Weil with the aim of developing Marxist studies in Germany. After 1933, the Nazis forced its closure, and the Institute was moved to the United States where it found hospitality at Columbia University in New York City" (Coradetti).

immanent rationality potential of communicative action” (p. 263). Because Habermas’s thinking extends to possible results derived from rational and effective communicative action, he seems to represent a significant break from the bases of critical theory embodied by fundamental critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Habermas is situated within The Frankfurt School, but he may actually represent a far more interdisciplinary intellectual tradition that positions his social theory as both shaped by and shaping of a civil society through rational exchanges of discourse.

As a graduate student, Habermas became interested in and read Heidegger’s<sup>7</sup> work on existentialism and metaphysics, and Habermas publicly questioned Heidegger’s allusions to and seeming defense of National Socialism; Habermas’s questions went unanswered (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). Heidegger’s lack of response further convinced Habermas that the German philosophical tradition had failed because they had neither the resources to understand nor criticize National Socialism (Bohman and Rehg, 2014).

Heidegger’s silence and Habermas’s convictions of the German philosophical failure motivated Habermas to seek other outlets, eventually turning to “conceptual resources from Anglo-American thought, particularly its pragmatic and democratic traditions” (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). As such, Habermas represents the expansion of the Frankfurt School to a more global scale (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). Habermas’s critical theory is far more encompassing in scope than his predecessors’ deliberations and incorporates a multifaceted interdisciplinary approach. This expansion in global scope is demonstrated by the incorporation of ideas developed by other influential thinkers from a

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<sup>7</sup> “Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was a German philosopher whose work is perhaps most readily associated with phenomenology and existentialism” (Wheeler, 2011).



range of disciplines. As notable rhetoric scholar Herrick (2005) further explains, “extending the work of the Frankfurt School, [Habermas] employed an analysis influenced by Marx<sup>8</sup> and Freud<sup>9</sup> to argue that political corruption, criminality, and class warfare were the major problems to be addressed by the humanities” (p. 236). By integrating ideas cultivated by Marx and Freud, Habermas built on the traditional critical theory foundations initiated by Horkheimer and Adorno. Habermas’s critical theory incorporate a more cosmopolitan worldview rooted in communicative exchanges that build consensus resulting in communicative action.

Yet, some scholars question Habermas’s inclusion as the ‘second generation,’ or most recent philosophical thinker, to be included in The Frankfurt School, despite the fact that Habermas was not only Professor of Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt from 1964-1972 and again from 1983-1994, but he was also the chair (Wiggershaus, 2007; Müller-Doohm, 2017, pp. 252-253; 265-270). It could be argued that the question of his membership was due to that fact that, over time, Habermas came to embody a more cosmopolitan and multidisciplinary philosophical approach to Critical Theory.

For Habermas, the Enlightenment ideals of reason and rationality are primary insomuch as “some identify Habermas as the last rationalist” (Gunaratne, 2003, p. 1). Yet, Habermas breaks away from Kant’s<sup>10</sup> moral action theory, typified by the Categorical

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<sup>8</sup> See Wolff, J. (2017, April 12). Karl Marx. Retrieved November 11, 2019, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/>.

<sup>9</sup> See Thornton, S. P. (n.d.). Sigmund Freud. Retrieved November 11, 2019, from <https://www.iep.utm.edu/freud/>.

<sup>10</sup> See Johnson, R., and Cureton, A. (2016, July 7). Kant's Moral Philosophy. Retrieved November 20, 2018, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/>.

Imperative, and, through the later work of Max Weber<sup>11</sup>, Habermas gives Enlightenment ideals of rationality a sociotheoretic twist (Gunaratne, 2003, pp. 1-2; Heath, 2003, p. 13). In terms of Critical Theory, Habermas draws on Horkheimer's foundational definition.<sup>12</sup> In 1972, Horkheimer provided a three-fold definition of Critical Theory directed to a specific practical purpose of seeking human "emancipation from slavery," which acts as a "liberating ... influence," and works "to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers" of human beings (Horkheimer 1972, p. 246; Bohman, 2005).

Similarly, Habermas utilizes three suppositions combining social science and philosophical analysis. Habermas's version of Critical Theory is explanatory, practical, and normative, and requires cooperation and coordination between philosophy and social science (Bohman, 2005). In addition, Habermas presupposes that communication is central to rational thought (Erikson and Weigård, 2004). Furthermore, as McCarthy (1978) notes, "Habermas's argument is, simply, that the goal of critical theory—a form of life free from unnecessary domination in all its forms—is inherent in the notion of truth; it is anticipated in every act of communication" (p. 273). For Habermas, then, the goal of critical theory is that freedom is essential to truth and is part of every communicative action and exchange.

Habermas advocates for a procedural approach to rationality where conclusions can be revisited and revised owing to human fallibility. Recognizing human fallibility helps drive "Habermas's perspective [that] rather implies a *procedural view of*

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<sup>11</sup> See Kim, S. H. (2017, November 27). Max Weber. Retrieved November 20, 2018, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/>.

<sup>12</sup> See Bohman, J. (2005, March 8). Critical Theory. Retrieved November 20, 2018, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/>.

*rationality*, where it is not our conclusions but the manner in which we arrive at them which are permanent” (Eriksen and Weigård, 2004, p. 4). Habermas prioritizes the rational procedure and processes undertaken to arrive at a conclusion, almost more than the conclusion itself.

Though Habermas’s work in procedural rationality and critical theory is inherently communicative, his work in communication specifically begins to manifest during a linguistic turn in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Crioni, Gomes, & Zuin, 2015, p. 924). Eventually, Habermas culminates this idea in a two-volume work, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, and explains, “critical societal theory does not relate to established lines of research as a competitor; starting from its concept of the rise of modern societies, it attempts to explain the specific limitations and the relative rights of those approaches” (1981;1984, p. 375). Communication, then is central to Habermas’s rational thought (Habermas, 1981;1984; Erikson and Weigård, 2004; Herrick, 2005; Crioni, Gomes, & Zuin, 2015). Moreover, it is communication within the public sphere and how human beings demonstrate rational agency that guides Habermas’s explorations after his linguistic turn.

Consequently, Habermas removes the competitive aspects of philosophy and social science as an either/or supposition and replaces that with a both/and notion that creates space for his work in communication. Central to Habermas’s reframing of critical theory and his theory of communicative action as a communication paradigm is the situating of human exchanges and human existence within the public sphere. For Habermas, the public sphere is a fundamental guiding metaphor that permits human beings to engage, to question, to collaborate, to understand, and to create a shared sense

of meaning that beckons the emergence of ethical human action within civil society. An understanding of Habermas's notion of the public sphere and how it simultaneously shapes and is shaped by communication is vital to situating the theory of communicative action as a communication paradigm. In order for a civil society to exist, and thus human existence to flourish, both discourse and action must be embedded within the public sphere.

### **Habermas's Public Sphere**

Habermas explores the metaphor of the *public sphere* throughout his corpus. While he creates his theory of communicative action, Habermas situates or embeds communicative exchanges or interactions within the public sphere, a fundamental metaphor for the theory of communicative action. The public sphere was a vital concern among philosophers in the years after World War II as they endeavored to derive some understanding, sense, or meaning from the atrocities so many witnessed or survived. Two fundamental philosophers and works that examine the public sphere are Hannah Arendt's 1958 work titled *The Human Condition*<sup>13</sup> and Habermas's 1962 work titled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (reprinted in 1989 by MIT Press).

For Habermas, the public sphere is intrinsically connected to rational thought, a civil society, and pragmatic procedural communication. Much like the emphasis on reason and rationality, Habermas's public sphere is deeply rooted in the Enlightenment and the increasing literacy levels of the middle class who could read both novels and

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<sup>13</sup> See d'Entreves, M. P. (2019, January 11). Hannah Arendt. Retrieved January 30, 2019, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/#CitPubSph>.

items printed in the press, and then engage in discussion about the topics (Habermas, 1989; Gunaratne, 2003, p. 1; Hauser, 2010, p. 42). These discussions were different and separate from those that took place with legislative or governmental implications. In fact, the discussions themselves took place in non-governmental spaces that were not subject to the regulatory norms or ramifications of a governed location. These locations were more social in nature and were formed around activities not restricted to the academic or governmental realms. The middle class and upper-middle class of newly literate people comprise what Habermas (1989) described as the “bourgeois public sphere” and explains, as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized by publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason (p. 27).

Through the use of people’s public use of reason creating the new public sphere, “the problems of politics, society, and culture are represented in general terms and opened to rational discussions” (Wells, 1996, p. 115), which supports what Arnett, Fritz, & Bell (2008; 2018) identify as Habermas’s commitment to discourse ethics. Thus, engagement in the public sphere through what Hauser (2010) identifies as “discursive standards” directly connects “to Enlightenment ideals of reason and rational opinion from which society forged a public understanding of matters that were consequential in private relationships” (Hauser, 2010, p. 42). This is to say that, for Habermas, the dialectic of public and private spaces was tantamount to human existence.

Furthermore, the rise of the bourgeois public sphere paralleled the development of gathering spaces in metropolitan European cities. It was in these newly public, non-governmental spaces that the rational conversations of the middle class took shape. Hauser (2010), a notable scholar on the rhetoric of publics and public spheres, provides a thoughtful explication of Habermas's grounding of the Enlightenment's bourgeois public sphere as it parallels the rise of café society, notably in Parisian salons, London coffeehouses, and Germany's table societies (*Tischgesellschaften*). These public places provided gathering places in the 17<sup>th</sup> century for members of the bourgeois to gather, share and debate news, ideas, literary criticisms and politics (Hauser, 2010).

Additionally, an important trademark of the café society was the shift to a more literate and educated bourgeois public. Thus, "the coffeehouses and salons gave the middle class a participatory life in discussions of timely issues from which a general consensus or public opinion might emerge" (Hauser, 2010, p. 41). Café society undergirds Habermas's public sphere because it provides physical locations for publics to gather, public opinions to emerge and for a greater level of involvement in public life than previous historical moments. These exchanges of a literate society within the coffeehouses, salons and table societies "formed the public sphere of rational-critical debate in the world of letters within which the subjectivity originating in the interiority of the conjugal family, by communicating with itself, attained clarity about itself" (Habermas, 1989, p. 51). For Habermas, it is within the public sphere where people can rationally exchange ideas and engage in discourse. Within this realm, the public voice critical to the theory of communicative action emerges, but that public voice must be understood within the horizons of the lifeworld—a second driving Habermasian

metaphor—that provides color and texture through the connective threads of a co-created and shared culture that generates a civil society.

### **Habermas's Lifeworld**

A second fundamental metaphor paramount to understanding Habermas's theory of communicative action is *lifeworld*. Translated from the German *lebenswelt* (Fairtlough, 1991, p. 548; Crioni, Gomes, & Zuin, 2015 pp. 924-25), Habermas situates lifeworld as a philosophical term in what might be considered an interdisciplinary context that harkens to Husserl's phenomenology of embodiment.<sup>14</sup> The lifeworld is “synonymous with the concept of *civil society*” and functions as a “culturally transmitted framework, which thus binds together the individual and society” (Eriksen and Weigård, 2004, p. 46). Habermas's explorations of the lifeworld seek to answer his questions of what makes social order possible in a post-war life. These explorations serve as the basis for the theory of communicative action.

Habermas begins his inquiry into social order by introducing contrasting terms: lifeworld and system, which function as “counterparts of and homes to communicative and instrumental action” (Crioni, Gomes, & Zuin, 2015 pp. 924-25; Finlayson, 2005, p. 47). Both lifeworld and system serve as distinct spheres of social life, but lifeworld is Habermas's “name for the information and unmarketized domains of social life: family and household, culture, political life outside of organized parties, mass media, voluntary organizations...” (Finlayson, 2005, p. 51). Within the lifeworld, communication is the medium that encourages and permits the exchange of ideas and a shared sense of

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<sup>14</sup> See Behnke, E. A. (n.d.). Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology of Embodiment. Retrieved November 30, 2018, from <https://www.iep.utm.edu/husspemb/>.

meaning to emerge through procedural rationality (Finlayson, 2005). The lifeworld is not subject to the constraints and biases of power within the system. The resulting shared sense of meaning in the lifeworld that is attained through reason permits the creation of communal identities and grants membership within those communities.

Furthermore, the lifeworld is organized through the transmission of cultural and historical conditions, insomuch as they develop through rational communication to form a background or horizon<sup>15</sup> for social interaction (Habermas, 1981; 1987; Fairlough, 1991; Finlayson, 2005). The horizon “designates the limit of a human being’s field of vision under normal conditions. The field of vision is unified [which creates space for a shared sense of meaning], but it is not a totality, since it cannot be apprehended all at once” (Finlayson, 2005, pp. 51-52). The lifeworld possesses a stabilizing quality for the public sphere (Heath, 1998, p. 44) and creates a horizon, a backdrop, where rational discourse (i.e. communication) takes place. The basic functions of human life are performed in the lifeworld in ways that others can access and understand. For Habermas, consensus for human life and activity can only develop through rational communicative actions in the lifeworld.

Habermas negatively contrasts the notion of the lifeworld with that of the system. The system, for Habermas, is where common patterns of strategic action (not a favorable term for Habermas) take place to serve the interests of institutions and organizations. The system is hegemonic, driven by a desire for and acquirement of power, and lacks both concern and interest for rational [ethical] human discourse that results in consensus,

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<sup>15</sup> A deliberate use of the phenomenological term derived from Husserl that also is critical to Gadamer. See: Malpas, J. (2018, September 17). Hans-Georg Gadamer. Retrieved November 30, 2018, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/>.



or a shared sense of meaning, as a catalyst for action. The system is what permits and encourages the maelstrom of “fake news<sup>16</sup>” that proliferates within the current historical moment.

Moreover, the system is easily explained by Habermas scholars Bohman and Rehg (2014) who suggest that the system represents a relaxing or skewing of defined norms of civil society in the public sphere, often portrayed and/or driven by the media, but that still operate within legally recognized boundaries. In short, the system is the gray area of ethical and dialogic practices that can lead to disarray and corruption within a civil society and its institutions. Bohman and Rehg (2014) highlight capitalistic markets and bureaucracies as prime examples of the system driven by “nonlinguistic media [who] take up the slack in coordinating actions” as opposed to communicative action that holds agents accountable for actions and reactions.

Importantly, Habermas (1981; 1987) also posits that the system creates conditions rife for colonization and marginalization, a far cry from rational discourse and communicative action in the public sphere. The system exists in direct contrast with the rational discursive exchanges that take place within the public sphere. Thus, Habermas situates his theory of communicative action within the metaphors of the public sphere and lifeworld to demonstrate the means through which praxis can emerge through rational discourse and communicative action.

### **Theory of Communicative Action**

Habermas’s linguistic considerations of the late 1960s and early 1970s culminate

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<sup>16</sup> See Gelfert, A. (2018). Fake News: A Definition. *Informal Logic*, 38(1), 84–117. doi: 10.22329/il.v38i1.5068.

with his two-part text, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, published in 1981 with reprints utilized here (Volume 1 published in 1984; Volume 2 published in 1987). In the preface to *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1* (1981;1984), Habermas provides readers with a compass to orient the ensuing explorations by stating that “the theory of communicative action is not a metatheory, but the beginning of a social theory concerned with validating its own critical standards” (Habermas, 1981;1984, xxxix). Because Habermas is positioning the theory of communicative action as a social theory, he is not merely concerned with linguistics or semantics in general, but more what linguistics (and semantics) can yield as action when engaged via rational procedures.

Habermas’s focus on a social theory of rationality in the theory of communicative action interweaves major threads of “20<sup>th</sup>-century Western philosophy, and social theory—speech-act theory and analytic philosophy, classical social theory, hermeneutics, phenomenology, developmental psychology and (Parsonian)<sup>17</sup> systems theory” (Gunaratne, 2003, p. 2). As such, the breadth and depth of Habermas’s thinking draws on an array of ideas across the 20<sup>th</sup> century and requires a framework to better discern the connections and conclusions Habermas offers. To this end, Habermas scholars Eriksen and Weigård (2003) provide a thoughtful summary of three major roots of Habermas’s work to categorize the range of ideas Habermas evaluates:

1. *Analytical philosophy of language* founded on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept of *language game* and the development of *speech act theory*;

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<sup>17</sup> See Miller, S. (2019, April 9). Social Institutions. Retrieved January 30, 2018, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-institutions/>.

2. *Phenomenological* tradition drawn from Edmund Husserl and later sociologist Alfred Schutz who introduced the *lifeworld* metaphor as the basis for human knowledge; and
3. *Pragmatism*, connected to the American philosophical tradition, represented by philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and social psychologist George Herbert Mead (*symbolic interactionism*) that emphasizes the uniquely human use of language and the ways language structures the way humans understand and operate in the world.

Habermas incorporates these three roots in the theory of communicative action as he works to achieve both his theoretical and methodological outcomes (Bohman and Rehg, 2014), and he begins his task by discussing various theories of rationality (Habermas, 1981; 1984). Rationality, for Habermas (1981; 1984;), consists of “how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge” (p. 11) and how those speaker-actors can draw on that knowledge to generate consensus [shared sense of meaning] through reasoned/rational argument (p. 86). In other words, reaching the shared sense of meaning through rational exchanges is the key to building consensus.

Working to generate consensus guides Habermas’s contemplations of speaking/acting interactions through a pragmatic lens to yield “a theory of rationality [that] thus attempts to reconstruct the practical knowledge necessary for being a knowledgeable social actor among other knowledgeable social actors” (Bohman and Rehg, 2014). Habermas situates his thesis pragmatically and with a praxis-orientation to implementation. That is, for Habermas, it is not enough to merely arrive at a rationally

formed consensus. Once imbued with practical reason, a social actor must work within the public sphere to practice what he has learned and to share those ideas with others.

Regarding this work of the social actor, in *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume I*, Habermas (1981; 1984) categorizes four kinds of action found in society:

1. Teleological: an actor makes “a decision among alternative courses of action, with a view to the realization of an end, guided by maxims, and based on an interpretation of the situation” (p. 85). Additionally, Habermas positions strategic action as a subset of teleological action, though the two terms become intertwined or equivalent (Eriksen and Weigård, 2004, ch. 4).
2. Normative: actors in a social group pursue “socially integrating agreement about values and norms instilled through cultural tradition and socialization” (p. 101).
3. Dramaturgical: “players and their publics” endeavor to arrive at consensus (p. 101).
4. Communicative: “the interpretive accomplishments on which cooperative processes of interpretation are based represent the mechanism for coordinating action” (p. 101).

While Habermas identifies the four forms of action in the societal categories listed above, it is his thesis that communicative action is the most crucial. Moreover, Habermas “takes as his point of departure [from the instrumental conception of rationality, while not presupposing an alternative communicative conception] the assumption that agents always have available to them a set of different, often incommensurable standards of choice” (Heath, 2003, p. 13). For Habermas, communicative action emerges through

agency, while instrumental action (the system) generates boundaries to agency in ways that are either marginalizing or colonizing. Communicative action embraces human agency, while instrumental action of the system works to diminish or eliminate agency, and by extension, humanity. For Habermas, communicative action permits a rationally derived, shared sense of meaning [consensus] to grow within the public sphere and against the lifeworld to meet his theoretical and methodological goals.

In sum, Habermas envisions his theory of communicative action as “a theory of rationality [which] thus attempts to reconstruct the practical knowledge necessary for being a knowledgeable social actor among other knowledgeable social actors” (Bohman and Rehg, 2004). The fundamental vehicle of acquiring and exchanging rational knowledge begins with a speech act.

### **Speech Acts & Validity Claims**

Habermas provides an example of two speakers who engage in a procedural language exchange, called speech acts, but with different outcomes. One outcome of the procedural language exchange is communicative and situated within the lifeworld of the public sphere; the other is deemed “strategic” and situated within systems in the public sphere (Habermas, 1981; 1984, p. 8; Eriksen and Weigård, 2004, p. 4). The different outcomes result from the fallibility of speech acts because they are created by humans. The example of the two speakers and different outcomes clarifies Habermas’s notion of rationality and reminds readers that “knowledge can be criticized as unreliable. The close relation between knowledge and rationality suggests that the rationality of an expression depends on the reliability of the knowledge embodied in it” (Habermas, 1981; 1984, p. 8).

Furthermore, by utilizing speech acts, Habermas suggests that language, through communicative reasoning, is implicitly oriented toward understanding and consensus [shared sense of meaning] (Schaefer, Heinze, Rotte & Kenke, 2013, p. 1). Consensus, then, can only occur when a second agent is introduced, and speech acts are exchanged. Habermas suggests that two or more actors can establish a relationship and work together to seek a mutual understanding about both the action situation the actors encounter and “their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of interpretation refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus” (1981; 1984, p. 86). Consensus involves a mutual understanding as well as careful coordination of action items to be executed. Communicative action thus requires “the interaction of at least two people who establish a relationship, and who come to a common understanding of the situation in which they are acting through interpretation” (Wells, 1996, p. 114; Herrick, 2005, p. 237). The emphasis on communicative speech acts as a rational exchange connects to Habermas scholars Eriksen’s and Weigård’s (2004) identification of human communication as “a medium of rationally binding character...which means that agents’ action will depend on how they evaluate the statements of other agents” (p. 4). Thus, human communication is irrevocably linked to human beings’ abilities to arrive at rationally mutual conclusions, what Habermas identifies as consensus, and then to act accordingly.

The introduction of a second agent to create an exchange or interaction of speech acts elevates the speech act from the private individual to a public arena with the potential to generate action. Because the speech act is public and includes at least a second agent, opportunities for a shared sense of meaning [what Habermas terms

consensus] and coordinated action emerge (Heath, 2001, p. 22; Crioni, Gomes & Zuin 2015, p. 924). And yet, because of the interpretive qualities of language, Habermas requires the agents' speech acts to withstand rational examination through a procedural exchange he terms *validity claims* (1981; 1984), a sort of checks-and-balances or cross-examination process used to provide rational evidence in support of the initial speech acts and communicative exchange(s).

Throughout the *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas not only attempts to reach his stated outcomes for the project, he also endeavors to create a rationalized model (a term Habermas uses throughout the theory of communicative action) of language. As such, the speech acts of an agent, when engaged with at least a second agent, call forth a need for validity claims "that can only be redeemed through appeal to public justificatory resources" (Heath, 2001, p. 19). Habermas (1981; 1984) describes this exchange when he writes, "the interpreter cannot become clear about the semantic content of an expression independently of the action contexts in which participants react to the expression with a 'yes' or 'no' or an abstention" (pp. 115-116). In other words, when messages are exchanged dialogically, simple yes or no answers will not suffice to create understanding that might permit a shared sense of meaning to emerge.

The single syllable "yes" or "no" responses can indicate confusion as the responses do not "make clear to himself [the individual agent] the implicit reasons that move the participants to take the positions they do" (Habermas, 1981;1984, pp. 115-116). To arrive at a conclusion of agreement or disagreement, as statements are examined through the exchange of validity claims and without the influence of external elements that could inject bias, misleading, or false claims, the original two agents must

understand, through reason and rationality, the points each are trying to convey based on the information “at their disposal. These (most often implicit) reasons form the axis around which processes of reaching understanding evolve” (Habermas, 1981;1984, pp. 115-116).

Yet, Habermas goes a step further and contends that an individual agent can, in effect, influence the outcome, understanding, and decision-making processes of another human agent or group. Habermas (1981;1984) contends, “if, in order to understand an expression, the interpreter *must bring to mind the reasons* in which a speaker would, if necessary and under suitable conditions defend its validity, he is *himself* drawn into the process of assessing validity claims” (pp. 115-116). By entering into the “processing of assessing validity claims,” an agent interferes with the other individual agent’s conclusion of the exchange by reason of his own accord.

Habermas explains that an outside person should not influence the individual rational decision-making processes and conclusion that an agent might reach. He reminds, “for reasons are of such a [individualized] nature that they cannot be described in the attitude of a third person, that is, without reactions of affirmation or negation or abstention” (Habermas, 1981;1984, pp. 115-116). A third person will interfere with an individual’s agency to ultimately influence the outcomes needed to reach consensus. The individual agent who is responsible for interpreting messages and validity claims during the exchange must not be unduly influenced because he or she must arrive at his/her own rational conclusion. This is to say that “the interpreter would not have understood what a ‘reason’ is if he did not reconstruct it with its claim to provide grounds; that is, if he did not give it a *rational interpretation*” (Habermas, 1981;1984, pp. 115-116). For



Habermas, the objective is to arrive at a rational conclusion that builds consensus through a mutually rational exchange. This rational exchange is what permits validity claims to emerge, be reinforced, and stand resolute because the rational conclusion results from each agent arriving at his or her own understanding or “rational interpretation” of the exchange and situation(s) (Habermas, 1981;1984, pp. 115-116). Ultimately, conclusions and consensus must be born of rational processes that permit individual agents to understand validity claims on their own merit.

Furthermore, Habermas scholar Heath (2001) suggests that because Habermas situates speech acts as validity claims that can be justified or supported by evidence in the public sphere, each speaker is required “to know the conditions under which these validity claims could be redeemed. Thus, public accountability is an intrinsic feature of linguistic communication...[and] the success of the speech act rests in the achievement of mutual understanding” (p. 19). This ongoing commitment to accountability is an issue Habermas returns to in his later work *On the Pragmatics of Communication* (1998).

While writing *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, Habermas builds on the ideas of *The Theory of Communicative Action* and the rational pragmatics of communicative action to reinforce public accountability. He writes, “a speaker, with a validity claim, appeals to the reservoir of potential reasons that he could produce in support of the claim” (Habermas,1998, pp. 232-233). Essentially, speakers must appeal to others and build rationally valid claims that are rooted in and supported by evidence.

Through the interpretation of reasons and evidence deemed valid, the speaker also becomes part of the conditions necessary to arrive at a conclusion that “make an utterance acceptable” (Habermas,1998, pp. 232-233). Thus, not only is evidence (in Aristotelian

terms, *logos*) a critical part of rationally supporting and understanding validity claims to arrive at a conclusion and consensus, but so, too, is the perceived credibility of the speaker (in Aristotelian terms, *ethos*).

For Habermas, the dialogic exchanges and validity claims are a holistic process that permits the human agents to arrive at a rational conclusion. Habermas (1998) writes, “in this, the acceptability conditions point to the holistic character of natural languages; every single speech act is linked via logical-semantic threads to numerous other, potential speech acts, that could take on the pragmatic role of reasons” (pp. 232-233). In essence, as humans, we are embedded agents who are situated contextually and, through the exchange of validity claims, must arrive at the most rational conclusion within the given situation.

Through the linguistic exchange of validity claims, “dialogue affords the opportunity to test propositions and their underlying values [resulting in] agreements forged among interdependent participants in dialogue on the basis of open and fairly constructed argument” (Herrick, 2005, pp. 237-238), thus reinforcing the interpretive rhetorical nature of communicative action to create consensus or a shared sense of meaning and demonstrating that communication is inherently rational.

In addition, speech acts and validity claims take shape in the public sphere with consensus as the desired outcome for Habermas. Hence, it is only by achieving a public understanding of consensus through discourse that communicative action can exist (Habermas, 1981; 1984; Eriksen and Weigård, 2004; Hauser 2010). Essentially, through the exchange of validity claims, understanding emerges between or among the communicative agents, the speakers, to reach agreement on the meaning of the exchange,

then to act on it appropriately and strategically.

The rational process of exchanging validity claims to create a shared sense of meaning, or consensus, is ongoing, and so, too, are the resulting agreements on the ways to act deliberately and strategically. Habermas (1981; 1984) contends, “the validity basis of norms of action changes insofar as every communicatively mediated consensus depends on reasons” (1981; 1984, pp. 89-90). Thus, as rational exchanges continue and speaking agents question societal norms, the previously established authoritative institutions, like government or religion, become no longer sacred and untarnished. Because of this shift in thinking through rationality, “sacred authorization becomes dependent instead on the justificatory accomplishments of religious worldviews” (Habermas, 1998, pp. 232-233). Habermas was deeply disturbed by this shift and the potential threat to reason that it purports when individual agents no longer reach conclusions based on validity claims and rational decision-making processes. Instead, individual agents are being influenced by dogma with little to no recourse.

Furthermore, the sharing of ideas through validity claims and reason informs the notion that decision-making and the emergence of consensus must be separate from governing dogmatic entities. Habermas (1998) explains, “to the degree that these interpretative accomplishments become independent from the normative context, the institutional system can deal with the growing complexity of action situations...” (pp. 232-233). This separation from governing entities such as legal or religious bodies is required because those institutions may impart normative presuppositions on their members.

Habermas further elucidates his distinction of human agency and communicative

action by writing, “The communicatively mediated application of action norms depends on participants coming to shared situation definitions that refer simultaneously to the objective, the normative and the subjective facets of the situation in question” (Habermas,1998, pp. 232-233). In other words, because humans are situated contextually, they are compelled to undertake the dialogic exchange of validity claims to arrive at a rational conclusion and then to enact or execution the rationally based decision, or consensus, that is reached within the given context of the human experience within the public sphere.

Because human existence is embedded within the public sphere, Habermas presupposes that communicative action is what permits humans to evaluate situations, rationally assess the context, and then reach a rational conclusion of the specifically designed action(s) that must follow. He writes, “participants in interaction must ask themselves [to] relate the relevant norms to the given situation and tailor them to special tasks” (Habermas,1998, pp. 232-233). Notwithstanding, human agency and rationally derived decisions are only possible when they are done without the threat of consequences or retribution in the public sphere.

By acknowledging the consensus that emerges through rationality, the institutions can face the shifts within the public sphere “by branching out into a network of social roles and special regulations within a framework of highly abstract norms” that recognizes human autonomy (Habermas,1998, pp. 232-233). The new “network of social roles and...regulations” attends to humans with agency who can implement rationally sound ideas and solutions that not only were generated by consensus, but also can be used as a building block for ongoing communicative action within the public sphere.

To summarize, by achieving consensus, the agents involved in speech acts that have withstood the validity claims procedure have not only effectively discovered or affirmed their individual identities, but together the agents can effectively engage in communicative action, to enact their shared rational consensus into practice, within the public sphere.

Following Habermas's explications of rationality as it traverses speech acts through validity claims to achieve consensus, he creates a communication paradigm that moves individuals' private speech acts into the public sphere textured against the lifeworld. Ultimately, Habermas provides a communicative framework that uncovers or affirms individual identities, situates them collectively within the public sphere, and invites a shared sense of understanding and meaning to emerge with resulting action.

### **Theory of Communicative Action & Corporate Social Responsibility**

#### **Communication**

Habermas's theory of communicative action offers a theoretical communicative framework to better understand the role of corporate social responsibility in corporate communication that eventually creates opportunities for philanthrocapitalism to emerge. Habermas's theory of communicative action functions paradigmatically and reminds corporate communication scholars and practitioners of the need for rational communication processes generated by discursive speech acts supported and discovered by validity claims to permit consensus (a shared sense of meaning) to emerge democratically and with accountability.

As Habermas scholar Heath (2001) reminds, Habermas's considerations are not only about speech agents who agree to adopt a rule that guides their interactions and

exchanges, but also the speech agents are held accountable to uphold the rule “...established using the mechanism of communication oriented toward mutual understanding...” (p. 25). The rationally agreed upon rules for communicative exchanges become rooted in the ongoing accountability of the speech acts and their resulting actions. The public aspects of the speech acts that occur between two or more agents within the public sphere allow the shift from private to public, individual to organizational, and permit businesses and organizations to engage in these speech acts via corporate communication tactics and relationship-building strategies with stakeholder audiences.

These strategies are permitted by what Habermas (1989) identifies under the coordinates of the “rediscovery of civil society” and reminds that the institutional core of civil society is within the public sphere beyond government/state control and economic concerns; this institutional core resides publicly among agents who have reached rational consensus to gather in public spaces such as “churches, cultural associations, and academies to independent media, sport and leisure clubs, debating societies, groups of concerned citizens, and grass-roots petitioning drives all the way to occupational associations political parties, labor unions, and ‘alternative institutions’” (Habermas, 1989, pp. 453-454; Gunaratne, 2003, p. 5). Moreover, it is within these new public spaces where discourse takes place to invite dialogue that shares and informs other speech agents about news, information, generational shifts, work-life balance and other sense-making subjects that are now part of the consensus and accountability structures of life (Kuhn et al, 2008, p. 166). The new structures can also include today’s corporate organizations within the marketplace, where meetings and even the proverbial “water

cooler” conversations permit engagements for the “rediscovery of civil society.”

In today’s postmodern era (Lyotard, 1979) of narrative disarray and overlap, it is through communicative engagement and action that many find meaning and community [consensus] with others who share an aim to do good works, individually and organizationally, to benefit others. This creates the conditions for corporate social responsibility to gain both interest and power in the corporate communication landscape.

### **Habermas, Corporate Social Responsibility & Philanthrocapitalism**

Situating Habermas’s theory of communicative action within the public sphere permits a pivot to understand the emergence of corporate social responsibility, as demanded by organizational stakeholders, within the marketplace landscape. Howard Bowen introduced the notion of corporate social responsibility in 1953, yet with nearly 40 scholarly and marketplace definitions, consensus around the term and practice remains murky.

Still, the lack of a singular clear definition allows a shared sense of meaning to emerge akin to Habermas’s views connected to myriad forms of corporate social responsibility—foundations, donations, volunteerism—and today, philanthrocapitalism. Because corporate social responsibility encompasses such an array of diverse perspectives and models, so too is the communication used to engage organizational stakeholders comprised of individuals or groups “who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 25). Yet, scholars and marketplace practitioners both seem to recognize the power of corporate social responsibility communication<sup>18</sup> and the strategic value it can create for a brand or

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<sup>18</sup> See Crane, A. (2012). *The Oxford handbook of corporate social responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University.

organization.

Chaudhri (2016) points to the multiplicity of ways corporate social responsibility functions in corporate communication: "...the corporate communication of CSR [corporate social responsibility] serves several interrelated functions, including building an organization's image, identity, and reputation; inviting stakeholder support and identification by creating awareness, information-sharing, and proactive deflection of (anticipated) criticism" (p. 421). Much like the way Habermas's theory of communicative action prioritizes consensus as a shared sense of meaning, corporate social responsibility and corporate communication tactics function to "align diverse stakeholders in a manner that allows organizations to reap the strategic benefits of CSR [corporate social responsibility]" though no "one-size-fits-all" approach will be effective at aligning stakeholders' notions of consensus (Chaudhri, 2016, p. 421; 427).

Thus, corporate communication efforts work to align organizational missions, values and visions with stakeholders, thereby creating a shared sense of public meaning within and around the public sphere of the organization. By building that form of consensus, the theory of communicative action can be understood as a model to help guide corporate communication and corporate social responsibility engagement and programming in meaningful ways to benefit not only an organization's own stakeholder interests, but to enact meaningful changes within the public sphere of humanity and the global marketplace.

Stakeholder demands, expectations and enactments of corporate social responsibility during the current historical moment has created the conditions for a new, large-scale form to emerge: philanthrocapitalism. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, individual



and corporate philanthropic efforts became part of reputation management strategies utilized by barons of industry like Carnegie and Rockefeller. Since that time, philanthropy has entered the practice and profession of corporate communication as corporate social responsibility, which serves as the pivot point for philanthrocapitalism to dawn.

As a term, philanthrocapitalism was introduced in 2006 with the publication of an essay titled “The Birth of Philanthrocapitalism.” The essay was published as part of a special edition of *The Economist* that explored a theme called “the business of giving” (2006; 2008, 2015). Matthew Bishop, New York bureau chief, US Editor, and author of the essay, positioned philanthrocapitalism as uniquely separate from traditional forms and ideas of charity and giving. Bishop also differentiated the term *philanthrocapitalism* and explicated the metaphor to separate it from traditional notions of corporate philanthropy and/or corporate citizenship. Bishop’s (2006; 2008, 2015) identification and subsequent explorations suggest philanthrocapitalism represents a paradigmatic shift (Kuhn, 1996) that differs from charity, corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship as a whole.

Fundamentally, philanthrocapitalism differs from traditional “corporate philanthropy, which has often been ineffective: giving away small sums of money typically to generate positive publicity rather than change the world. Nor is it like old-fashioned corporate social responsibility” that aligns more in public relations and reputation management strategies (Bishop and Green, 2008, p. 7). Philanthrocapitalists are “seeking better ways to work with charitable nonprofit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)...increasingly trying to find ways of harnessing the profit motive

to achieve social good” (Bishop and Green, 2008, p. 6). For philanthrocapitalists, achieving social good requires not only financial and social capital, but carefully constructed relationships that are rooted in consensus agreement about the need to generate awareness and actively focus, through programming, on the social issues they hope to transform and change. These relationships and the good works they can achieve are a result of communicative action.

Discursively, philanthrocapitalism, as both metaphor and practice, assigns direction and meaning to understand the rationale, or the *why*, behind billionaires who choose to disperse their massive wealth (financial and social) to address major social issues that plague humankind (Kuhn et al., 2008). Additionally, these billionaires seek to maximize the impact of their financial donations and resources by working to create innovative solutions that result in a heightened and shared sense of global citizenship.

Functionally, philanthrocapitalism has historic roots in the various means of philanthropic giving and nonprofit activities shaping the American way of life since the founding of the country, but philanthrocapitalism signals a paradigmatic shift to address specific social issues on a global scale. Philanthrocapitalism seeks to combine the financial and social capital of highly successful business and industry leaders with their business acumen and vision to address a diverse range of social causes. Chief among the philanthrocapitalist movement are Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett through their donations and work with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The philanthrocapitalist movement in many ways incorporates Habermas’s theory of communicative action, as both rely on rationally constructing a shared sense of meaning [consensus] through communication to act within the public sphere.

The emergence of philanthrocapitalism is, in large part, owed to a lifeworld perspective of the successful business leaders who drive the movement. The Age of Transcendence, identified as “an era of epochal change” by Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe in 2014, bears witness to what they describe as “an historical *social transformation of capitalism*” where business executives, like Gates and Buffett, “are champions of a new, humanistic vision of capitalism’s role in society” (xxii-xxiii). It is this humanistic view that undergirds the shift to communicative action and philanthrocapitalism.

Like Habermas, these leaders are shifting attention to the ways in which a shared focus, or consensus of meaning, can help address global social problems related to health, development, and education, as well as policy and advocacy. Philanthrocapitalism in The Age of Transcendence is a response to the current historical moment that utilizes communicative action with global reach to build consensus, to enact programming, and to work within the public sphere of humanity.

## **Implications**

Understanding the basic coordinates of Jürgen Habermas’s *The Theory of Communicative Action* grounds corporate communication enactment, engagement and communication of philanthrocapitalism through corporate social responsibility. Driven by the guiding metaphors of lifeworld, public sphere, validity claims, and consensus, the theory of communicative action is a philosophical framework to understand how philanthrocapitalism emerges to challenge traditional corporate social responsibility and transforms conversations, resources and actions about philanthropy and social change.

Moreover, these coordinates individually and organizationally align stakeholders via consensus and a public shared sense of meaning to an organization’s mission, vision,

and values, with overall implications to an organization's reputation. This is what permits philanthrocapitalist efforts to move from a vision orientation to an action orientation. Furthermore, the philosophical grounding presented in Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action* presents opportunities to consider the widespread applications for corporate social responsibility and the emergence of philanthrocapitalism within a framework of corporate communication.

Habermas's theory of communicative action can be used to discern corporate social responsibility implications via corporate communication that permits the shift to philanthrocapitalism. Moreover, this philosophical texturing of corporate social responsibility and philanthrocapitalism attends to the ongoing question of *why* that is prevalent among business and community leaders, stakeholders and global citizens.

In the upcoming chapters, the question of *why* shifts to questions of *who* and *how*. The next chapters will attend to those questions of *who* and *how* by analyzing the mission, values and strategic programming initiatives of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Operating under a mission that every life has equal value, while at the same time embracing the ideal of difference, the Gates Foundation focuses on health, education and development issues by building strategic partnerships and providing funding, support, advocacy and education initiatives on a global scale. The Gates Foundation has experienced both successes and failures as it embodies the philanthrocapitalist movement in the historical moment described as the Age of Transcendence.

## **Chapter 3: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:**

### **History, Mission and Values**

*Bill, thank you. The world's a better place.*

~Steve Jobs, August 1997 cover of *TIME Magazine*<sup>19</sup>

The marketplace landscape is rife with cautionary tales that detract dreamers and entrepreneurs from taking the risks or brave steps necessary to think and work differently by establishing a new company or brand. Even more harrowing are the tales of competition where companies and brands are ruthlessly swallowed by business mergers, usurped by established leaders and industry titans, left to dwindle in their own despair, or never find enough funding to launch and bring unique ideas to fruition. The tales of competition in the global marketplace are often vicious and signal peril to those who might dare to enter the arena. At a basic level, only the strongest survive and the rest are left to wonder what might have been. In many ways, the description of today's marketplace landscape encapsulates the laissez-faire economic theory proposed during the Scottish Enlightenment by Adam Smith in 1776, but it also reflects the competitive drive and ambitions of two pioneers of the technology industry: Bill Gates and Steve Jobs.

Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, the co-founders and visionaries of Microsoft and Apple, respectively, embodied the drive to be the best and to not only enter the marketplace arena, but to reshape it and emerge victorious as the technology leaders in

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<sup>19</sup> Clifford, C. (2017, August 29). When Microsoft saved Apple: Steve Jobs and Bill Gates show eliminating competition isn't the only way to win. Retrieved February 3, 2020, from <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/29/steve-jobs-and-bill-gates-what-happened-when-microsoft-saved-apple.html>.

software and personal computing. In many ways, Gates and Jobs, armed with vision and drive, were the mercurial and unapologetic gladiators during the burgeoning technology wave of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In August 1997, however, the competing gladiators became collaborators, partnering to create a “rivalrous friendship...[that] is the stuff of tech lore” (Linzmayer, 2004; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012; Clifford, 2017). The partnership signaled a seismic shift in the technology landscape and continues to shape it today (Linzmayer, 2004; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012; Clifford, 2017). The “seismic shift” announced the dawn of a new collaboration that sparked technological innovations and products that have reshaped not only the technology industry, but the way humans live, work and communicate worldwide. This glorious end result, however, emerged from a perilous start.

In 1985, Steve Jobs was removed from Apple following a power struggle during which the company’s board of directors voted against him in favor of CEO John Sculley, whom Jobs had recruited in 1983 after Apple first entered the Fortune 500 rankings (Linzmayer, 2004; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012). The leadership change at the CEO level occurred after Apple became a publicly held company in 1981 (Linzmayer, 2004; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012). Following the installation of Sculley as CEO, Jobs redefined his role and refocused his interests on creating the MacIntosh computer, which debuted in 1984 to great fanfare with an iconic Super Bowl ad, but resulted in disappointing sales (Linzmayer, 2004; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012; Clifford, 2017). The disappointing launch of the MacIntosh personal computer created financial difficulties for Apple because the company had to absorb many of the costs related to the development and roll-out of the product. The deficit proved to be the tipping point for

Apple's leadership. In 1985, Jobs resigned and described this turn-of-events as a "betrayal" and he left the company as a "public failure" (Linzmayr, 2004; Siegel, 2011; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012;). In short, Steve Jobs was very publicly "out" from the company he created.

After Jobs's ouster, he and a hand-selected group of five Apple employees reunited. When Jobs left Apple in 1985, he took with him Rich Page, Bud Tribble, Susan Barns, Dan'l Lewis and George Crow (Gallagher, 2018). This quintet—Page, Tribble, Barns, Lewis and Crow—fulfilled a range of valuable roles at Apple as senior controllers, engineering managers and marketers (Gallagher, 2018). Together, Jobs and his selected former Apple employees worked to develop and launch a computer development company specializing in computers for higher education and business markets called NeXT (Carlton, 1997; Linzmayer, 2004; Isaacson, 2011; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012).

In addition to creating NeXT, Jobs began working with *Star Wars* visionary and storyteller George Lucas at his Lucasfilm production company (Carlton, 1997; Linzmayer, 2004; Isaacson, 2011; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012). Jobs purchased the computer graphics division of Lucasfilm in 1985 for \$10 million (Ott, 2019). The result of Jobs's personal and financial interest in the computer graphics department at Lucasfilm was the creation of Pixar, now a subsidiary of Walt Disney Studios (Carlton, 1997; Linzmayer, 2004; Isaacson, 2011; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012). Pixar made history in 1995 with the release of *Toy Story*, distributed by Disney, as the first fully computer-animated, feature-length film (Ott, 2019). *Toy Story* opened with \$30 million in box office returns over Thanksgiving weekend, leading to \$365 million in total global box office earnings (Ott, 2019). The smash hit provided a much-needed boost and

success for Jobs who eventually sold Pixar to Disney for \$7.4 billion in 2006.

Interestingly, even during Pixar's success, Jobs remained devoted to developing NeXT Computer. When Apple acquired NeXT in 1997, Jobs returned to Apple and shortly was restored as CEO of the then-struggling company.

Steve Jobs's return to Apple in 1997 was far from triumphant. In fact, Apple was on the verge of bankruptcy by 1997 (Carlton, 1997; Linzmayer, 2004; Gallo, 2011; Isaacson, 2011; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012; Clifford, 2017). Jobs famously challenged Apple employees to reframe their thinking and to realize "We have to get it out of our heads that for us to win, Microsoft has to lose...The battle for the desktop is over. And we lost" (as qtd. in Segall, 2012, p. 187). The idea that Apple "lost" was never more apparent than during the annual Macworld Expo trade show and conference that year. In fact, the outcomes that resulted from Apple's dire financial straits, Jobs's efforts to revitalize the brand, and the groundbreaking partnership that was announced during the Macworld Expo would prove pivotal for the brand and Steve Jobs.

Jobs presided over the last of three 1997 Macworld Expo events in his trademark glasses, blue jeans, and New Balance Speakers as Apple's restored CEO. The last Expo of the year took place in August in Boston. In YouTube footage from the AP Archive (1997), Jobs can be seen speaking conversationally from the stage, addressing the audience about changes while standing in front of a screen with the words "meaningful partners" in stark black and white. There was nothing to indicate that the next few seconds would usher forth a "seismic shift" or landmark moment that would redefine the entire technology industry.

Then, the screen flickered, and the name Microsoft appeared in large, bold letters.



In the next moment, Jobs grandly announced not only a “friendship” with Microsoft, but a fully developed, mutually beneficial partnership with chief rivals Bill Gates and Microsoft (Linzmayr, 2004; Gallo, 2011; Isaacson, 2011; Lashinsky, 2012; Segall, 2012; Clifford, 2017). The screen faded to black again, and then Bill Gates joined the Expo via videoconference from Microsoft’s Headquarters in Seattle, Washington (AP Archive, 1997). Together, Steve Jobs and Bill Gates went on to explain some of the details defining the Jobs/Gates and Apple/Microsoft “meaningful partnership.”

As part of the most important terms of the “miracle” (Carlton, 1997, p. 442), Bill Gates agreed to make a capital investment of \$150 million in Apple and “pledged to support Microsoft Office for Mac for the next five years” (Segall, 2012, p. 188; Clifford, 2017). In return, Apple agreed to end a lawsuit and additional legal hostilities that had been broiling against Microsoft (Segall, 2012, p. 188; Clifford, 2017). The announcement by *both* Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, while described by some as a “corporate olive branch,” also generated shocked reactions from the assembled crowd, stakeholders and the technology industry as a whole (Clifford, 2017). Clearly, an announcement and partnership of this magnitude was unprecedented and, largely, unimaginable.

Segall (2012), who worked closely with Steve Jobs as ad agency creative director for NeXT and Apple, described the partnership announcement and its reactions: “some people choked at the imagery during this announcement (and groaned audibly) as Steve Jobs spoke in front of a giant screen with a video connection to Gates in Seattle” (p. 188). Other members of the audience actually booed the announcement (AP Archive, 1997; Clifford, 2017). The visual of Bill Gates on the screen behind Steve Jobs seemingly

personified Apple's iconic 1984 Super Bowl ad (Segall, 2010, p. 188). Only this time, many wondered if they were witnessing Apple's somber doom.

In a 2017 retrospective of the Apple-Microsoft deal and its announcement, Clifford included a powerful reaction published in *The New York Times* as an opinion piece: "Even in cyberspace, the moment can only be described as surreal." In fact, Jobs himself acknowledged the dramatic and desperate appeal of the event in Walter Isaacson's famed 2011 biography and characterized the event as the worst presentation mistake he'd ever made. In essence, "Gates's giant image looming over Steve made Microsoft seem more important than Apple" (Segall, 2012, p. 188). For Apple and Jobs, the partnership was a strategic business decision. For Apple's stakeholders, Gates's looming face potentially signaled the death knell of the company and the oversight of someone who was once the brand's chief rival.

In the same Clifford (2017) retrospective, Jobs described stepping away from the competition mindset of technology gladiators, to "break that paradigm," and recognized that "...Apple was very weak and so I called Bill up and we tried to patch things up" (para.10). The results of Jobs "calling Bill up" procured desperately needed financial support for Apple and the end of a lawsuit against Microsoft, as well as the resolution of various protracted legal battles between the two companies.

It is important to note that the partnership with Gates and Microsoft was not done altruistically. Both brands and businesses benefitted. Microsoft strategically recognized the business opportunity as an entry to develop software for the Mac that lead to ongoing innovation and development. Perhaps more importantly, Apple continued to not only exist but eventually thrive with the introduction of innovative products, including: iMac,

iTunes, iTunes Store, Apple Store, iPod, iPhone, App Store and iPad and a landmark “Think Different” advertising campaign (Segall 2012). In fact, Apple eventually surpassed Microsoft in both earnings and industry rankings.

In August 2018, a little over 20 years after announcing the partnership with Microsoft, Apple became the first publicly traded company to be valued at over \$1 trillion (Heath, 2018). In addition to the historic achievement of being the first company valued over \$1 trillion, the company’s value was equal to approximately 5% of the United States’ 2018 gross domestic product (Heath, 2018). In the late 1990s, Apple was crippled in the marketplace arena, and Bill Gates and Microsoft strategically propped up the brand, but by the late 2010s, Apple was an industry leader and a global juggernaut.

In addition to the capitalistic partnership, the two titans at the forefront—Steve Jobs and Bill Gates—represented a unique partnership of innovative minds. The partnership between Jobs and Gates, while still remaining marketplace competitors, was noteworthy. When Jobs died in 2011 after a battle with cancer, Gates honored and remembered Jobs and his lasting impact on the technology industry by saying, “[We] have been colleagues, competitors and friends over the course of more than half our lives...the world rarely sees someone who has had the profound impact Steve has had, the effects of which will be felt for many generations...” (Clifford, 2017, para. 19). Gates further acknowledged his collaboration with Steve Jobs on a personal level: “For those of us lucky enough to get to work with him, it’s been an insanely great honor. I will miss Steve immensely” (Clifford, 2017, para. 19). Notably, the relationship between Apple and Microsoft has also ended. Steve Jobs, the innovative technology pioneer and icon of the Apple brand, left an indisputable impact on the landscape of the technology

marketplace, but, perhaps more importantly, changed the ways humans think, act and communicate.

### **Shifting Perspectives**

Interestingly, in the same year as the Apple-Microsoft announcement, Bill Gates made strategic moves in the philanthropic efforts and activities that he and his wife had long privately supported. While operating as a bastion of traditional capitalism at Microsoft, Bill Gates was also planting the roots of philanthrocapitalism in his own life. As long-time philanthropists and champions of others less fortunate, Bill and Melinda Gates recognized suffering and looked for opportunities to offer help in myriad ways. As a result of their growing philanthropic efforts, both in time and financial capital, Bill and Melinda Gates, perhaps unintentionally, recognized the larger implications of a paradigmatic shift to philanthrocapitalism and created the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The simple acknowledgement that every human life has value stands at the forefront of the guiding ideals of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The call to help others, to create opportunities, provide resources, and tackle large-scale issues on a global scale without expectation or need for a return harkens to even the earliest uses of the classical *philanthrôpía* and most forcefully manifests under the current marketplace paradigm of philanthrocapitalism in what some scholars describe as an Age of Transcendence.

This current historical moment of The Age of Transcendence, as identified by Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe (2014, p. xxii), is integral to the helper mentality on a global scale. The Age of Transcendence differs from the previous eras Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe

identified, the Age of Empowerment and the Age of Knowledge, because the Age of Transcendence “signifies a cultural watershed in which the physical (materialistic) influences that dominated culture in the twentieth century ebb while metaphysical (experiential) influences become stronger” (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014, p. xxviii). Moreover, The Age of Transcendence is built on innovation, empathy and a strategic broad scope understanding of what is possible, both individually and collectively, and recognizes society as the ultimate stakeholders (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014). For Sisodia, Sheth & Wolfe, “the wellbeing of civilization depends on the cultures and actions of business enterprise” (p. 160-161) that create the opportunities for business acumen and philanthropic initiatives to merge.

The historical moment of the Age of Transcendence has seen the coalescence of entrepreneurs’ innovative business spirits with financial and social capital in large part as a response to the rise of technology and the large-scale aging of the global population. Moreover, it is during this Age of Transcendence in which “people, particularly leaders, become more conscious, we are able to create new types of entrepreneurial enterprises that will help solve our most serious problems and will evolve humanity upward to fulfill our unlimited potential as a species” (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014, p. xxvi). It is the Age of Transcendence, and its emphasis on addressing serious problems to maximize potential, that has ushered forth Bill Gates’s eventual movement to full-time philanthrocapitalistic endeavors.

The Age of Transcendence represents a striving—the physical, mental, emotional, and cultural striving—to recognize what is and to work for what could be as individuals and as a global community. In short form, the Age of Transcendence has reminded, or

perhaps more emphatically demanded, that globally we not only look for helpers, but that we take care of each other and work to be helpers. This historical moment has both shaped and called for a dynamic new response to philanthropy and helping others, i.e., philanthrocapitalism, and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is one embodiment of that response.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, initially founded in 1997 as The Gates Library Foundation and later expanded, renamed, and rebranded, is rooted in a guiding philosophy that all human lives equally matter. Additionally, the foundation recognizes the disparities that exist economically, socially, politically, culturally and in more ways that prevent developing nations and underserved populations to thrive (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Moreover, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has carved out a unique position as the paradigmatic representation of the philanthrocapitalistic movement. With grants totaling over \$50 billion (through the second quarter of 2018), the financial capital has surpassed any previous iterations of philanthropic giving in history (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). While the financial capital is staggering, the social capital might possess an even higher value because it is the strategic partnerships, as well as the global reach and innovative spirit to effectively solve problems and create a better world, that sets the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation apart under the banner of philanthrocapitalism.

By examining the history and structure of The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as a case study of philanthrocapitalism in action, this chapter contributes to the ongoing scholarship and practice of corporate communication by delving into the mission, values and historic programming of the organization to identify how a shared mission and

vision, paired with strategic financial and social capital, can create positive social change on a global scale. The following chapter will attend to the bigger programming initiatives that are now in place that further enact the Gates Foundation mission, and also examine the shortcomings, failures and solutions that have also taken shape since the Foundation's beginnings in 1997. Furthermore, the aim of this chapter is to identify coordinates for marketplace practitioners that might be adapted and implemented within other philanthropic programming initiatives.

First, an overview of the emergence of philanthrocapitalism is reexamined to better understand the metaphor as a paradigmatic shift (Kuhn, 1996). Next, the mission and history of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is evaluated with attention to the creation of the organization, progression of giving activities, and ultimate enactment of the mission as it grows to implement initiatives and address problems on a global scale. Lastly, the chapter provides a launch point for subsequent chapters to offer careful examination of the five unique strategic grantmaking sectors. Ultimately, this chapter explores how a group of "impatient optimists working to reduce inequity," as Bill and Melinda Gates describe themselves, (1999), came together to address ongoing global challenges.

Overall, this chapter aims to contribute to the ongoing body of corporate communication scholarship and practice of philanthrocapitalism by offering considerations of how a large global foundation—rooted in a commitment to the equal value of all human lives—can embolden others to share the mission and vision and take up the mantle of programming activities to create sustainable change.

## Philanthrocapitalism Revisited

In 2006, Matthew Bishop published an essay titled “The Birth of Philanthrocapitalism” as a special report in *The Economist*. In doing so, Bishop introduced a new term, a new way of thinking, into the ongoing lexicon used to both describe and understand philanthropy within the public domain. That term, *philanthrocapitalism*, is a guiding metaphor that attends to the characteristics described as part of the Age of Transcendence and the actions taken by billionaire entrepreneurs like Bill Gates (and others in the technology sector especially) who have recognized the social impact they can generate as “champions of a new, humanistic vision of capitalism’s role in society...that transcends the narrower perspectives of most companies in the past, rising to embrace the common welfare in its concerns” (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014, p. xxiii). To better understand the ideals that characterize philanthrocapitalism and philanthrocapitalists, Bishop and Green (2008; 2015) explain,

...the spirit of philanthrocapitalism: successful entrepreneurs trying to solve big social problems because they believe they can, and because they feel they should... the same themes come up time again: they have the resources; the problem needs to be fixed; they know how to fix problems, for that is what they [philanthrocapitalists] do all day in business (p. 30).

Philanthrocapitalism, then, is inherently situated as part of the Age of Transcendence as characterized by the entrepreneurial leadership of philanthrocapitalists, swiftly developing technology, an aging population, and an aim to benefit others without expectation or need for reciprocity. By recognizing the opportunity, need and responsibility to expand capitalistic ideas and practices, philanthrocapitalists like Bill



Gates acknowledge the call to action to not only succeed in business, but to draw on those skills to serve others.

Philanthrocapitalism functions discursively (Kuhn et al., 2008) as a guiding metaphor to understand how the large donations and strategic partnerships can work together with entrepreneurial vision to creatively address many of the ongoing public social concern that affect the well-being of people worldwide. Philanthrocapitalists and their partners work together motivated by the *potential* to utilize critical thinking skills and resources to create lasting impact and potentially eradicate many of the problems that threaten human life and well-being (Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015). Philanthrocapitalists, then, operate from a humanistic perspective rooted in the *opportunity* to create change, the *potential* to address problems and provide solutions with lasting *impact*.

Interestingly, Bishop and his co-author Michael Green (2008; 2016) suggest that philanthrocapitalism emerged nearly a decade prior to Bishop's 2006 publication. While philanthrocapitalism has roots in Andrew Carnegie's initial ideas presented in *The Gospel of Wealth*, philanthrocapitalism truly sprang forth in 1997, coincidentally the same year as the founding of the initial Gates Foundation, when Ted Turner, himself a billionaire and creator of cable news network CNN, pledged \$1 billion in support of a variety of United Nations Initiatives. Several months earlier in 1997, Turner had publicly rebuked fellow billionaires Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, for not giving more of their considerable wealth, vision and assets to charity. Again, by deliberately giving colossal amounts of money to charity and strategically creating or aligning with organizational partners, successful entrepreneurs like Turner, Gates and Buffett drew on Carnegie's ideas but sought to implement them more in

keeping with philanthrocapitalistic guidelines and goals to address public and social concerns.

In 2006, Warren Buffett announced his plans to give away most of his private wealth in annual installments to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Buffett was also named to the executive leadership board of the foundation (Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015). Then in 2010, Bill Gates and Buffett announced the creation of the Giving Pledge, “an open invitation for billionaires, or those who would be if not for their giving, to publicly commit to giving the majority of their wealth to philanthropy” (The Giving Pledge LLC, 2010). By signing the Giving Pledge, billionaires commit to give away at least half of their wealth before their death (Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015; The Giving Pledge LLC, 2010). As of May 2019, over 200 people have pledged their commitment as signatories and the membership represents a global reach of 23 countries across six continents (The Giving Pledge LLC, 2010). More than just a one-time event, signing and promising to be part of the Giving Pledge “means becoming part of an energized community of some of the world’s most engaged philanthropists to discuss challenges, successes, and failures, and to share ideas to get smarter about giving” (The Giving Pledge LLC, 2010). The creation of the Giving Pledge demonstrates another element of philanthrocapitalism beyond the creation of the Gates and Buffett partnership and the creation of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Now, it is critical to return to the history and accomplishments of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to better understand its position as the exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action.

### **Microsoft and Gates’s Early Philanthropy**

On April 4, 1975, Bill Gates and Paul Allen co-founded the software company

Microsoft (a combination of the words “microcomputer” and “software”) and entered the emerging and highly competitive computer technology industry with a keen focus on personal computing (Zachary & Hall, 2018). Initially, the company developed and sold the programming language BASIC for the earliest generations of personal computers and the company quickly surpassed \$1 million in sales for the first time in 1978 (Zachary & Hall, 2018; Martin, 2018). The real company growth occurred in the mid-1980s when Gates and Allen created the MS-DOS and subsequent Microsoft Windows operating systems that would dominate the personal computer industry (Zachary & Hall, 2018; Martin, 2018).

Over time, Microsoft diversified its product holdings and brand portfolio and went public with an initial public offering (IPO) in 1986 (Zachary & Hall, 2018; Martin, 2018). Gates and Allen, who had left the company but retained a significant ownership stake, immediately became multimillionaires several hundred times over, and employees who owned stock, including the 11 “Microsofties” (Weinberger, 2019), became millionaires overnight (Zachary & Hall, 2018; Martin, 2018; Weinberger, 2019). In 2015, Forbes named Microsoft to the top spot of its annual listing of largest companies, and it consistently remains among the top-ranked businesses and brands in the global marketplace on a variety of indexes (Chen, 2015; Forbes, 2019). The fast rise of Microsoft and the resulting accumulation of wealth by so many can be attributed to myriad factors, but the booming technology industry created swift global changes in the ways people live, communicate, conduct business, interact with the world, and undertake philanthropy. Chief among those changes is the access of ideas and information, which leads to new ideas about what to do with the wealth of ideas, information and access to

financial capital. In many ways, the ideas, opportunities, and access outpaced the strategic vision and understanding of the potential impact to human life.

In 1994, Bill Gates married Melinda French, a former general manager at Microsoft. Both Bill and Melinda “were raised knowing it’s important to give back to the community” with both the Gates and French families instilling the values of “volunteerism and civic engagement” (Haller, 2019; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999). Together, Bill and Melinda Gates consolidated their philanthropic efforts to form the William H. Gates Foundation in 1994 to address global health and community needs in the Pacific Northwest; William H. Gates Sr. managed the new foundation and it was funded by an initial \$94 million stock gift from Bill and Melinda (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). This iteration of the Gates Foundation shaped and executed the Gates’s philanthropic activities until 1996.

While 1994 was the year philanthropic seeds were sown for Bill and Melinda Gates, 1997 proved to be a watershed year. Two key events took place in 1997. First, the Gates Library Foundation, under the direction of Patty Stonesifer, formerly a Microsoft senior vice president in the Interactive Media Division and DreamWorks SKG consultant, was founded as a separate sister organization to the original William H. Gates Foundation with a goal of breaching the digital divide and working to “ensure that, if you can get to a public library in the United States, you can access the Internet” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Stonesifer was an important leadership choice because the Gates Library Foundation was designed to build on and grow Microsoft’s Libraries Online initiative, a community affairs project that was initially launched in December 1995 with the support of the American Library Association. The purpose of

the project was to support urban and rural communities by creating programs to bring information technology and training opportunities to these underserved, and often isolated, places and people (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation Library and the William H. Gates Foundation continued to operate as separate entities.

The second major moment of 1997 occurred when Bill and Melinda Gates read an article about rotavirus that brought to light the death toll of over half a million children in the developing world (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011). They were shocked by the article and the lack of both attention and resources being directed to combat the infectious disease. Bill and Melinda Gates experienced what might be described as an epiphany by “recognizing that such a death toll would be seen as intolerable in any developed country, [and] they realized that only one, terrible inference could be drawn: some lives are considered more valuable than others” (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011, pp. 38-39). Not long after reading the article about rotavirus in the developing world, the global health emphasis of the William H. Gates Foundation “takes root [in 1998] with an initial gift of \$100 million to the Bill & Melinda Gates Children’s Vaccine Program” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Education programming and grants to support AIDS and polio vaccinations followed (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019).

Additionally, Bill and Melinda Gates visited Alabama, the first state to receive a grant from the Gates Library Foundation. The couple traveled in a bookmobile to see the results of the grant, toured public libraries in the state, and learned how the grant funding had been used to support Alabama libraries’ efforts to support technology and digital literacy via free computers and Internet access (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-

2019). The Gates Library Foundation expanded to include global reach when it announced the hiring of an international programs manager in July 1998; the first international grant was awarded in 2001 to a partner in Chile, South America (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019).

An August 1998 press release, shared a little over a year after the creation of The Gates Library Foundation, reflected on completed grant successes in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico, and spoke of new work underway in West Virginia with the ultimate goal of “reaching public libraries in all 50 states by 2001” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The year 1998 also saw ongoing integration and emphasis on global health activities when the couple announced a \$100 million gift and creation of a children’s vaccine program. The spread of technology, accessibility and digital literacy and attention to global health issues, especially related to children, continue as vital parts of the fabric and goals of the current Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation under the broader umbrella of educational and global health programming sectors.

The remainder of the 1990s saw continued growth, expansion of both financial donations and partnerships, and new programming. In 1999, the Foundation hosted Nelson Mandela who spoke about strategic giving during an open forum conversation with employees. Grants were also announced to support international vaccination programming with special attention to the AIDS crisis.

Next, The Gates Millennium Scholars program was created with a \$100 million gift from Bill and Melinda Gates to the United Negro College Fund. The goals of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program included creating and maximizing opportunities for

diversity in higher educational institutions and “fostering a generation of leaders who represent the full range of talents in a society” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019).

Diversity, educational opportunities and resources remain an integral part of the Foundation throughout overall shifts in direction and programming. At the forefront remains an ongoing commitment to recognizing the value of all human lives.

### **A New Era of Giving**

In 2000, The William H. Gates Foundation merged with the Gates Learning Foundation; the new organization was named the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with a goal “to build the right organizations, teams and strategies to increase the efficacy of grantmaking” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The merger was seeded with a contribution of nearly \$16 billion from the couple. In order to meet the large-scale goal, the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation operates under a guiding mission that every life has equal value and “works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives.” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). To support that mission, the Gates Foundation protects and promotes key values of optimism, collaboration, rigor, and innovation (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Each value is uniquely explained:

**Optimism**—We are impatient optimists by nature: we see the glass as half full and are motivated to confront problems that others consider impossible to solve.

**Collaboration**—We recognize that our resources and abilities are only a small part of what is needed to achieve our goals and that our impact is greater when we work with others.

**Rigor**—We pursue our mission with focus, discipline, and rigor to maximize our impact.

**Innovation**—We believe that many of the most intractable problems can be solved only through creative and innovative solutions (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999).

Working with a guiding mission and values, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation aims to bring those goals to life in very specific and focused ways.

Initially, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced programming initiatives in four key areas: global health, education, libraries, and the Pacific Northwest (PNW) where Microsoft and the new foundation are both headquartered (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Relationships with highly recognizable figures, like Bono and Jimmy Carter, heightened the new Foundation’s visibility and commitment to HIV/AIDS initiatives, as well as the array of challenges, especially social and economic, plaguing the African continent. In 2005, *Time Magazine* recognized Bill & Melinda Gates and Bono in the annual Persons of the Year edition. Together, the three were headlined under “The Good Samaritans” and described as “three people on a global mission to end poverty, disease—and, indifference” (Gibbs, 2005; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999). The partners’ mission was especially brought to light when Bono and Bill Gates challenged leaders, much like Ted Turner had earlier challenged Gates, during the annual World Economic Forum to devote more attention, resources and development funding to global health.

Much like milestones of 1997, two unprecedented announcements and a partnership that would forever change the scope and potential for impact generated by the



work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation occurred in 2006. In April of that year, a restructuring was enacted that further refined the foundation's strategic initiatives and potential for impact. The restructuring results in four core areas: Global Health, Global Development, U.S. Program; and Operations (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). This restructuring continues to provide the strategic approach to programming segments utilized by the Foundation today.

Later in June of 2006, Bill Gates publicly announced plans to step back from the daily operations of Microsoft, the company he co-founded in 1975, and shift his time, focus and energy to the Foundation in a full-time capacity (NBCUniversal, 2006; Einstein, 2013; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999; Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015, p. 3). This move followed Gates's decision to step down as Microsoft CEO in 2000 to focus his attention more exclusively on software strategy and philanthropy (NBCUniversal, 2006; Einstein, 2013; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999; Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015, p. 3). While Gates remained as Microsoft's chairman, the leadership transition was finalized by June 2008 and Gates began working full-time for the Foundation in support of its global philanthropic goals (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999; Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015, p. 3). Bill Gates remains in a guiding leadership role as co-chair and trustee along with Melinda Gates.

The second landmark event of 2006 also occurred in June. Warren Buffett, chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway and also known as the "Sage of Omaha," presented letters to each of his three children, a fourth to a proxy representing his deceased wife, and a fifth letter to Bill Gates (Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015, p. 1). Each of the children's letters and his late wife's letter contained promised bequests totaling \$6

billion (Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015, p. 1). The final letter outlined Buffett's giving strategy to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation totaling 10 million shares of Berkshire Hathaway stock valued at an estimated \$31 billion to be delivered annually via installments (Bishop & Green, 2008; 2015, p. 1; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999).

In his letter, Warren Buffett commended Bill and Melinda Gates and their eponymous Foundation, noting that he hoped the expansion of the Foundation's giving and programming would be "one of depth, rather than breadth" and that "the doubling of BMG's [the Foundation] present spending can increase the...already impressive effectiveness in addressing the societal problems upon which it now focuses" (Buffett, 2006; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999). Buffett concluded his letter by writing, "both of you have applied truly unusual intelligence, energy and heart to improving the lives of millions of fellow humans who have not been as lucky as the three of us...without regard to color, gender, religion or geography" (Buffett, 2006; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999).

As a result of his donation and ongoing partnership with Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett also serves in a leadership role for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. As a trustee, Buffett's role is in "helping to shape our vision and develop strategies to address some of the world's most challenging inequities" (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Buffett, in this role, works alongside Bill and Melinda Gates, William Gates Sr., the Foundation's CEO, and presidents from each of the five strategic programming areas to develop, guide and create opportunities and programming initiatives that address large-scale problems around the globe.

A year after receiving the letter from Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, a noteworthy Harvard University drop-out, was invited to offer Harvard's Commencement address. While sharing his remarks and amid the usual lauding and celebrations of such an event, Gates deftly implored the audience to leave Harvard that day with a higher sense, an awareness, and a call-to-action to help others. Gates admitted, "I left Harvard with no real awareness of the awful inequities in the world—the appalling disparities of health, and wealth, and opportunity that condemn millions of people to lives of despair" (The Harvard Gazette, 2017). He would go on to explain, "...humanity's greatest advances are not in its discoveries—but in how those discoveries are applied to reduce inequity...[which] is the highest human achievement" (The Harvard Gazette, 2017). Gates utilized this moment of achievement to inspire others not to greatness in their chosen career fields, but to pursue greatness in service to others, for the benefit of others, and to endeavor to reduce and remove inequities that form barriers to a shared sense of humanity in the world.

The remainder of the decade saw additional programming expansions under the umbrella of each of the five strategic programming areas and leadership changes at the executive level, notably CEO, CFO and COO, though the core leaders, Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett, and William H. Gates Sr. remained steadfast in guiding the Foundation and its initiatives, with input from each of the five programming segments' presidents. In 2009, the Foundation published its first annual letter from Bill Gates that outlined new and ambitious goals, as well as called for increased global aid to support foreign health and development initiatives in light of a global economic crisis (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The annual letter continues to evolve with the

inclusion of Melinda Gates, the announcement of annual projects and goals, and the transition to electronic delivery. The letter itself is now more of a featured item on the Foundation's website as an interview and/or blog with ongoing adaptability and interactivity each year (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). No matter its form, the letter always reflects on the foundation's goals, annual accomplishments and the work that still remains.

Created as a physical embodiment of the Foundation's mission, the Gates Discovery Center opened in 2011 and serves as the world headquarters for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates Discovery Center, 2011). The Gates Discovery Center is described as "designed to inspire and create optimism and hope, the campus is a hub for innovation and gatherings of experts from many fields, perspectives, and countries who are dedicated to improving lives here and around the world (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). With a twin mission to function and serve as "a catalyst to educate, inspire, and motivate local and global awareness and action," The Gates Discovery Center both celebrates the work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and provides an epicenter to guide and enact upcoming and future programming (Gates Discovery Center, 2011; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999). The Discovery Center, located in Seattle, Washington, is a multi-purpose location to showcase successes, inspire others, ground ongoing programming, and plan for future initiatives.

Over time, the renaming and reshaping of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as it remains known, solidified and was in a strong position to enact additional programming in its efforts to create change and eliminate global inequity. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation continues to work diligently through diverse efforts to fulfill

its mission through strategic partnerships, grants, and programming.

### **The Gates Foundation Today**

Today, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation remains committed to major philanthropic giving and large-scale global change. The foundation remains committed to its initial mission, though it has been reimagined as the foundation grows and its programming shifts. Currently, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation continues to be “guided by the belief that every life has equal value” and “works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The ongoing mission to reduce inequity takes shape in a variety of ways. In developing countries, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and its strategic partners work to improve people’s lives through empowerment strategies and healthcare and accessibility, as well as addressing by hunger and poverty issues to create global development, healthcare, growth and opportunity programming (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Additionally, programming in the United States “seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation strives to address large-scale issues both domestically and globally to maximize results.

On December 5, 2019, Foundation CEO Dr. Susan Desmond-Hellmann announced her decision to leave the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation after more than five years in the role (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Bill and Melinda Gates appointed Mark Suzman, president of the foundation’s Global Policy and Advocacy Division and chief strategy officer, as Desmond-Hellmann’s CEO successor,

effective February 1, 2020. While announcing the leadership change, Bill Gates commented, "...I have never been more optimistic about the opportunity to improve life for the world's poorest...[and] partnering with Mark on the work ahead" (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Suzman now leads the foundation as the CEO, while the entirety of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation remains under the direct guidance of co-chairs and trustees Bill and Melinda Gates, trustee William Buffett is trustee, and final co-chair William H. Gates Sr. (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019).

Programmatically, the Foundation portfolio includes five programming or grant-making areas: Global Development, Global Growth & Opportunity, Global Health, Global Policy and Advocacy, and United States Program (to improve U.S. high school and postsecondary education and support vulnerable children and families in Washington State).

Each grant-making area is guided by its own president with his/her own team and the leadership structure also includes Connie Collingworth, Chief Business Operations Officer and Carolyn Ainslie, Chief Financial Officer, who both work in Operations (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). In addition to those in leadership, the foundation operates with 1,489 employees and a 2018 Foundation Trust Endowment of \$46.8 billion (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). Financial reports for 2019, including tax filings and an annual independent audit, will not be made available until summer and fall of 2020, once the appropriate due diligence has been completed.

The foundation has provided or supported grants in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia and supported programming and work in 138 countries across the globe (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). While the foundation

headquarters remain in Seattle, Washington, an East Coast branch office is located in Washington, DC and global branch offices have opened to better coordinate the strategic efforts and programming. International branch offices are located in Delhi, India; Beijing, China; Europe and Middle East Offices (London, UK and Berlin, Germany), and Africa Offices (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Abuja, Nigeria; and Johannesburg, South Africa) (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019).

One of the most defining aspects of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation remains the focus on creating or building on established relationships instead of attempting to impose or dictate programming in communities. This focus on existing partnerships also is a strategic way to approach problems on a global scale. In the “What We Do” section of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s website, the strategic partnerships and global reach are intrinsically linked: “Rather than look at the challenges that people face by region, we identify challenges that can be tackled on a global level. We work with partners that can help to affect change globally, and then scale solutions to a local level” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, Golston, & Suzman, 1999). As overviewed in each forthcoming program area, the foundation’s grantmaking areas are strategically aligned with opportunities that emphasize “collaboration, innovation, risk-taking, and, most importantly, results” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019).

The focus on collaboration and innovation with a willingness to take risks to generate results has created unique opportunities to address large-scale global issues. In essence, this defines the philanthrocapitalism paradigm. While not all programming efforts have been successful, as subsequent sections will address, the investment of financial and social capital, the strategic partnerships and collaborations, and a deep-

seated desire to improve the lives of others permits the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to make great strides toward meeting its goals.

## **Reflections**

In their 2020 Annual Letter, published in February on Bill Gates's blog GatesNotes and titled "Why We Swing for the Fences," Bill and Melinda Gates write, "when we started our foundation 20 years ago, the world was, in many ways, very different from the one we live in now. It was before 9/11, before the Great Recession, and before the rise of social media" (Gates & Gates, 2020). Indeed, the world as it is known, lived in, experienced and communicated today has changed dramatically since the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the most recent and long-lasting of the philanthropic efforts created by the couple, emerged in 2000. While Bill and Melinda Gates reflect, their mission and focus remain an unwavering commitment to "the idea that every person deserves the chance to live a healthy and productive life. Twenty years later, despite how much things have changed, that is still our most important driving principle" (Gates & Gates, 2020). By keeping this principle at the forefront of programming and partnerships, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to embody its mission and transform the lives and opportunities of people less fortunate across the globe.

The Foundation's steadfast resolve to improve the lives of others on a global scale by directing funds and focus to five strategic impact areas permits the couple and their partners, including Warren Buffett, to "swing for the fences." Drawing on this popular baseball metaphor, Buffet himself urged Bill and Melinda Gates, and their partners to keep this mentality in mind when he pledged his monumental financial donation to the



Foundation in 2006 (Gates & Gates, 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020). To further explain this attitude, Bill and Melinda Gates write about the baseball mindset to swing as mightily as a batter possibly can because, while a batter might fail to connect with the ball or even “whiff” completely, a prime opportunity exists: “if you succeed in making contact the rewards can be huge. That’s how we think about our philanthropy, too” (Gates & Gates, 2020). Moreover, a simple base hit is not the goal. For those working with and on behalf of the Gates Foundation, “The goal isn’t just incremental progress. It’s to put the full force of our efforts and resources behind the big bets that, if successful, will save and improve lives” (Gates & Gates, 2020). Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett and the leaders, partners and volunteers working to enact the mission and principles of the Gates Foundation are not content to stand idly in the batter’s box, waiting for the perfect fastball down the middle. This is a group determined to take a mighty swing and who will not be “caught looking” at the plate, waiting for a better pitch to come its way. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, collectively, swings big for the fences at every strategic opportunity that comes to the plate. So far, the foundation has worked to meet this lofty abstract goal by spending a total of \$53.8 billion in philanthropic programming across the globe (Gates & Gates, 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020; Peters, 2020).

To better understand how the \$53.8 billion has been distributed, Bill and Melinda Gates include a pie chart to visually break down the strategic programming areas that have been funded. According to the 2020 Annual Letter and the Philanthropy News Digest (2020), funding has been allocated across the following programming initiative areas: 45% directed to global development; 29% allocated to global health; 16%

portioned for U.S. programs; and 10% funneled to other charitable programs. Since its inception, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has spent nearly \$60 billion in philanthropic programming to reduce global inequity and create opportunities to uplift and serve others.

While the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has achieved success and reached several impressive goals, the global health initiatives, in particular, have notably prevented the spread and deaths of preventable infectious diseases, one of the main issues that first sparked Bill and Melinda Gates to action in the late 1990s. The foundation has seen noteworthy successes through its work on global immunization.

As a result of strategic partnerships, GAVI (formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation [*sic*] launched in 2002 by the Gates Foundation in partnership with the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and UNICEF) “has helped vaccinate more than 760,000,000 children, resulting in the prevention of some 13,000,000 deaths” (Gates & Gates, 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020; Peters, 2020). Additionally, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation united with partners in 2002 to launch the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to provide “longer-lasting medications and preventatives such as injections and implants as well as non-biomedical interventions, with the aim of addressing factors in HIV transmission such as stigma, poverty, violence, and gender norms” (Gates & Gates, 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020; Peters, 2020). Undeniably, the large sums of financial capital are impressive, yet it is the strategic partnerships and uniting of vision with social capital that demonstrates the holistic approach of philanthrocapitalistic enterprises typified by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation since its inception.

The successes (and failures to be discussed in chapter five) of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation over the past twenty years are remarkable, but the momentum has been building since the foundation was formally created in 2000. Since that time, both Bill and Melinda Gates have offered glimpses of their thoughts and reflections, their unwavering commitment to the foundation's mission, and their belief in helping other people. Both have also delivered compelling calls for action and change to audiences in the position to embrace and act on their mission to reduce global inequity. These meaningful insights were shared most powerfully during Bill Gates's 2007 Harvard Commencement Address and the joint address offered by Bill and Melinda Gates at Stanford University in 2014.

With a self-deprecating joke about not formally finishing his Harvard degree, Bill Gates opened his 2007 Harvard Commencement Address by acknowledging his designation as "Harvard's most successful dropout...[doing] the best of everyone who failed" (Gates, 2007). Arguably, that notorious designation might be shared today with Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook. Nonetheless, Gates went on to "remember above all about Harvard was being in the midst of so much energy and intelligence" noting the privilege of being there and the transformation he experienced. (2007). In the address, Gates admitted one (perhaps surprising) regret: "I left Harvard with no real awareness of the awful inequities of the world—the appalling disparities of health, and wealth, and opportunity that condemn millions of people to lives of despair" (2007).

Gates extolled his fortunate learning about economics and politics while at Harvard, and of course, the advancing march of the sciences and technology, but he powerfully noted, "humanity's greatest advances are not in its discoveries—but in how

those discoveries are applied to reduce inequity. Whether through democracy, strong public education, quality health care, or broad economic opportunity—reducing inequity is the highest form of human achievement” (2007). Furthermore, when Gates left Harvard, he mentioned that he had little to no awareness about the lack of educational opportunities, stark impoverished living conditions and the death toll of diseases rampant across the world. Notably, Gates (2007) said, “it took me decades to find out.” Addressing the graduates, guests, faculty and those assembled at the commencement directly, Gates said “you know more about the world’s inequities than the classes that came before...[and] in this age of accelerating technology—we can finally take on these inequities, and we can solve them” (2007).

Gates continued through the address, sharing stories of eye-opening and shocking instances where he and his wife learned about diseases and poverty and the millions of children dying annually as a result of both, and he challenged the audience to remember that, unlike the mothers and fathers of those children, Bill Gates and those assembled at the Harvard Commencement had both power and a voice. And, with that power and voice, Gates claimed, “we can make market forces work better for the poor if we can develop a more creative capitalism...that more people can make a profit, or at least make a living, serving people who are suffering from the worst inequities” (Gates, 2007). Moreover, Gates also emphasized the role of advocacy with government decision-makers “to spend taxpayer money in ways that better reflect the values of the people” (Gates, 2007). Combining this new creative capitalism and strategic advocacy creates the potential for global change. He opined, “If we can find approaches that meet the needs of

the poor in ways that generate profits for business and votes for politicians, we will have found a sustainable way to reduce inequity in the world” (Gates, 2007).

Gates continued in his address, speaking of ways to create sustainable global change to reduce inequity in ways large and small, by identifying, understanding and working to change patterns and cycles that build or perpetuate inequity. He spoke with enthusiasm, energy and optimism about the changes that could be rendered by the collective gathered at the commencement event that day.

Bill Gates ended with a charge to the audience to remember their privilege and opportunities and to find ways of giving and working to create those same things for others, even if it starts in the simplest of ways. He said, “Don’t let complexity stop you. Be activists. Take on the big inequities. It will be one of the greatest experiences of your life... You have more than we had; you must start sooner, and carry on longer” (Gates, 2007). Finally, Gates said remarkably, “I hope you will judge yourselves not on your professional accomplishments alone, but ... on how well you treated people a world away who have nothing in common with you but their humanity” (Gates, 2007). Momentarily, the Harvard audience was quietly stunned, but then burst into thunderous applause. Bill Gates had delivered a call-to-action, and over twenty years later is still leading the movement to create change.

Strategically executed between two landmark commencement addresses in 2007 and 2014, Bill Gates embarked on a three-day, cross-country college tour in 2010 with stops at five colleges, including: University of California, Berkeley; Stanford University; University of Chicago; Harvard University; and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) (Guo, 2010; Bishop, 2010). This was, essentially, a whistle-stop tour designed to

motivate college students and encourage them to put their academic and intellectual achievements to work for the betterment of humanity.

Gates traversed on the 2010 college tour with the purpose to inspire students, faculty and other listeners to focus more attention on inequity and generating solutions for global change. Notably, the college tour was Bill's first since redirecting his energies to the foundation full-time (Guo, 2010; Bishop, 2010). At each university stop, Gates delivered a 30-minute presentation titled "Giving Back: Finding the Best Way to Make a Difference" and also met with faculty during private roundtable discussions to discuss their work in the fight against global poverty (Guo, 2010; Bishop, 2010). Gates also met with small groups of students to listen and learn about their research and work in the areas of global health, poverty and education (Bishop, 2010).

Late in July of 2010, during a question-and-answer session with Jason Pontin, the editor-in-chief of MIT's *Technology Review*, Gates reflected on the privileged economic situation within the United States. Statistically, Gates said, "...there are more billionaires today [in the U.S.]...than ever before. And a lot of them may not know how much fun it is to get involved in giving or know that it's kind of like starting a new career." In light of that insight, he strategically and thoughtfully researched the creation of foundations and gathered a group "who had in common a pledge to give—not to all take one approach or pool money, but merely to find people who had things in common" (Bishop, 2010). A focus on commonality and creating working partnerships through a shared sense of meaning and purpose undergirds the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Repeatedly during the conversation with Pontin, Gates emphasized the need to energize young people, to leverage their talents, ideas and desire to put giving in action.

Gates said, “another key factor is that the earlier in life you think about this stuff, the more opportunity there is...starting earlier, giving earlier—that works” (Bishop, 2010). In large part, that summarizes the purpose of Bill Gates’s 2010 college tour. He was working to remind students and faculty members at privileged, highly respected research and educational institutions to look beyond economic impact and to seek opportunities to help others. Like the article in 1997 that sparked Bill and Melinda Gates into action, Bill Gates wanted to galvanize others, particularly college students. The college tour was an example of listening, learning, and motivating to action to build future opportunities for giving—time, talents and, eventually, treasure—to enact global social change to benefit humanity.

Seven years after Bill Gates delivered his spirited call-to-action at Harvard, both Bill *and* Melinda Gates teamed up to deliver the 2014 Commencement Address at Stanford University. Bill Gates opened the address by offering a hearty congratulations and then highlighted the unique bond he, Melinda, their foundation and even Microsoft have with the university: “Our formula has been to get the smartest, most creative people working on the most important problems...a disproportionate number of those people are here...” (Gates & Gates, 2014). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Jennifer Gates, Bill and Melinda’s daughter, graduated from Stanford University in 2018 (Cain & Bose, 2020).

Bill Gates recognized that over 30 foundation projects were underway in partnership with Stanford, ranging across topics such as disease cures and prevention, the changing landscape of higher education and learning institutions in the United States and creating opportunities for low-income students to benefit and earn college degrees (Gates & Gates, 2014). Regarding Stanford, he then stated, “there is a flexibility of mind here—

an openness to change, an eagerness for what's new. This is where people come to discover the future and have fun doing it" (Gates & Gates, 2014). After a brief exchange with Melinda about embracing the "nerd" label, Bill spoke about what they love most about Stanford: a pervasive and infectious *optimism* "that innovation can solve almost every problem" (Gates & Gates, 2014). That sense of optimism and its ability to identify solutions, create change, and make global impact functioned as the framework for the rest of the address.

Later in the address, both Bill and Melinda Gates spoke about their learning experiences witnessing the tragic outcomes of disease, poverty desperation and inequity. Both spoke poignantly about the heart-wrenching desperation they saw in so many people across the globe. In their own travels and personal encounters, they tried to bring comfort, to create change, and offer support from their hearts. They also recognized, however, that they possessed the financial and social capital and a vision to create real change (Gates & Gates, 2014). These experiences solidified their commitment to the mission and foundation they created. As Melinda recounted the particularly heartbreaking moment where she watched a child slowly succumb to death while peacefully watching the sunset, both a literal and metaphorical ending of the day, she not only drew inspiration, but was motivated to act. She said, "...sometimes, it's the people you can't help who inspire you the most" (Gates & Gates, 2014).

Over the first decade of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, its founders recalled notable achievements, including creating support groups and networks for sex workers in India to band together and empower each other to demand clients use condoms and practice safe sex (Gates & Gates, 2014). Melinda noted in her address,



“their brave efforts helped keep HIV prevalence low among sex workers, and a lot of studies show that is a big reason why the AIDS epidemic in India hasn’t exploded” (Gates & Gates, 2014). Returning to that important word that Bill first mentioned, *optimism*, Melinda said, “optimism for me...is a conviction that we can make things better---that whatever suffering we see, no matter how bad it is, we can help people if we don’t lose hope and we don’t look away” (Gates & Gates, 2014). Together, during that address, Bill and Melinda Gates did just that for the Stanford audience—they reminded them to keep hope and implored them to not look away, but to active pursue avenues to create change.

Later, Bill returned to the speaking role and reminded the audience of the power of optimism. He said, “even in dire situations, optimism can fuel innovation and lead to new tools to eliminate suffering. But if you never really see the people who are suffering, your optimism can’t help them. You will never change their world” (Gates & Gates, 2014). He then introduced what he described as a paradox. The paradox, Gates explained, is rooted in the great scientific and technological innovations in the world. He said, “We’re on the verge of mind-blowing breakthroughs in what human beings can do for one another. And people here are really excited about the future” (Gates & Gates, 2014). Except, he noted, there exists a seemingly paradoxical realization that many people will respond to the question, “is the future going to be better than the past” with a negative response (Gates & Gates, 2014). So, while Bill Gates steadfastly maintains the need for optimism, he has also recognized the need for a layer of empathy in recognition of the negative response.

In order to respond to the paradox, Bill Gates said, “If our optimism doesn’t address the problems that affect so many of our fellow human beings, then our optimism needs more empathy. If empathy channeled our optimism...we would answer with our innovations, and we would surprise the pessimists” (Gates & Gates, 2014). Shortly thereafter, Melinda Gates charged the audience to “let your heart break. It will change what you do with your optimism” (Gates & Gates, 2014). For Bill and Melinda Gates, channeling optimism and leading with empathy to lean into the suffering and inequity of the world is the pathway forward to create change.

As the couple wrapped their address, Melinda Gates boldly issued a challenge. She declared,

So here is our appeal to you: As you leave Stanford, take your genius and your optimism and your empathy and go change the world in ways that will make millions of others optimistic as well...[but know], you’ll come to see suffering that will break your heart. When it happens, and it will, don’t turn away from it; turn toward it. That is the moment when change is born (Gates & Gates, 2014). This speech and its conclusion are perhaps the most telling indicators of Bill and Melinda Gates’s conviction and vision for a path forward to reduce global inequity. It is also indicative of their belief in optimism, empathy and the collective power created when people to come together under that banner.

During the spring of 2018, shortly before her daughter graduated from Stanford and her son, Rory graduated from high school, Melinda Gates wrote an essay for *Time Magazine* titled, “What Graduates Need to Hear at Commencement This Year.” She wrote of her fondness for commencement speeches as a “unique chance for America’s

thinkers, doers and builders to offer a more personal reflection on the world as they see it and their hopes for the generation that will inherit it” (Gates, 2018). Yet, Melinda Gates wrote that in 2018 she was hoping for something more. Melinda Gates wanted to hear speakers deliver their thoughts and how they “plan to do more to ensure that vision of the future has a place in it for *every* graduate” (Gates, 2018). Melinda Gates wanted to hear commencement speakers embrace and advocate for change, opportunity and inclusivity across all audiences, regardless of social or economic status, race or gender.

Gates (2018) goes on to outline several key strategies to ensure that vision for the future comes to fruition. She charges business leaders to do just that—lead. For Melinda Gates, *leading* means advocating for diverse workforces and job opportunities for qualified minority applicants, providing paid family and medical leave, enacting mentorship and professional development opportunities for women, and taking paid family leave to model effective behaviors for employees to understand they can and should take that available leave, too.

In the essay, Melinda Gates concludes, “any commencement speaker can encourage young people to live up to their potential. But these graduates deserve more than encouragement; they deserve action. This spring, I’ll be listening with special attention to the leaders whose speeches reflect that” (Gates, 2018). Clearly, for Bill and Melinda Gates, deliberate action is what can and will create global sustainable change. Moreover, Bill and Melinda Gates have encouraged—arguably compelled—other leaders to step forward, to take action, and to create changes that benefit others in meaningful, respectful and sustainable ways.

## **Ongoing Mission**

The mission of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is unwavering in its goals and vision to operate under the belief that all lives have equal value and to reduce inequity that exists by addressing areas of concern related to global development, global growth and opportunity, global health, global policy and advocacy, and United States programming. In 2020 and beyond, the foundation will shift its attention to include a focus on two other key global issues: “climate change—including helping people in poorer countries adapt to the impacts caused by a changing climate—and gender equality” (Gates & Gates, 2020; Peters, 2020). Adding climate change and gender equality as part of the mission further expands the reach of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and its efforts to implement innovative, creative solutions to problems that threaten humanity on a global scale. Moreover, the inclusion of climate change and gender equality broadens the scope to further address global issues that pose a threat to humanity and our ongoing sustainability on the planet. The subsequent chapters will examine each of the unique programming areas individually to better understand the successes, challenges, and failures the foundation has encountered, sustained and/or overcome.

With failure comes opportunity to learn, and Bill and Melinda Gates remain steadfast in their commitment to reducing inequity and ensuring that all humans have the opportunity to lead healthy, productive lives. As described in their joint commencement speech at Stanford in 2014, they choose to lead with optimism and empathy. In fact, when asked during an interview to identify, or perhaps share the secrets of, his “superpowers,” Gates humbly replied, “If I have [a superpower], it has something to do

with optimism about scientific innovation...and being able to gather teams of people” (Huddleston, 2019). By continually choosing to lead with optimism, Bill Gates harkens to another figure known across the globe. In his careful and measured tone, with a deliberate direction to addressing the camera and, therefore, his young audience, Fred Rogers spoke to children about many of the same topics Bill Gates seeks to address. While not speaking of reducing global inequities per se, Mister Rogers used his eponymous show, *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* to impart the knowledge and tools children would grow up to need if the mission and vision of the Gates Foundation is to be accomplished.

Perhaps the most important connection between Bill Gates and Fred Rogers is not evident at first glance. While both are accomplished men, the connection they share most notably does not come in their accolades and professional acumen, but in their relentless optimism. In a 2018 *Forbes* article titled, “How Mister Rogers Can Make You A More Effective Leader,” Bruce Weinstein, a contributing writer in the leadership strategy section, highlights key leadership skills that Fred Rogers demonstrated that easily could and have been said about Bill Gates. Remarkably, Weinstein (2018) writes of two key ideas that both Mister Rogers and Bill Gates both seem to embody: first, every human being has dignity; and second, use your gifts to elevate. To better explain the first idea, Weinstein (2018) writes, “...pay attention to how Fred Rogers talks to others on the show and how they respond to such [respectful] treatment.” Unpacking the second idea seemingly suggests that individuals’ unique gifts (talents, skills and resources) should be used to make the lives of human beings better. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that

Fred Rogers believed that technology, in his case television, could be a tool for creating positive change through education.

Undeniably, the emphasis on human respect and dignity and using one's gifts to elevate others reminds us of both Fred Rogers and Bill Gates. Weinstein (2018) emphasizes, "In these troubled times, it's worth remembering that leadership is most effective when we seek to enhance the lives of the people we work with and for." That idea of leadership extends through the television sets of a Pittsburgh-based public access television channel into living rooms across the world, as well as to a global nonprofit foundation that works collaboratively and attentively with global partners to reduce global inequity.

During times of tragedy, people turn to famous leaders, their ideas and noteworthy quotations, to try and understand or make sense of the losses. One such quotation that is often spread across different messaging platforms, particularly social media, is attributed to Mister Rogers (Television Academy, 2019) who famously reminded children, and adults, that in troubled times, we should "always look for the helpers." While embedded in an ongoing era of human inequity, perhaps it is to helpers like Bill and Melinda Gates that Mister Rogers would remind us to look for in dark times.

In summation, this chapter contributed to the corpus of corporate communication scholarship by closely examining an unprecedented marketplace partnership and the historical moment of the Age of Transcendence. Then, the chapter situated and explained philanthrocapitalism and provided a case study overview of the mission, history, leadership and organizational structures of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In doing so, the Gates Foundation is upheld as an exemplar of philanthrocapitalism.

Further, the chapter aimed to demonstrate how a clear mission, values, strategic partnerships and philanthrocapitalistic resources, both in financial and social capital, can work together to address issues on a global scale. The hope is to inspire others to take up the mantle of beneficence, recognizing all lives as having equal value, and working to reduce global inequities.

The chapter shined a light on unique and landmark developments of a global philanthrocapitalistic organization so that corporate communication scholars and practitioners might work to understand and then adapt these ideas and practices for the greater benefit of others ultimately building on the works of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and continue to inspire others to make the world a better place.

## **Chapter 4: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:**

### **Twenty Years of Optimistic Programming**

*Your lifetime together will, in the end, be a verdict on your recognition of the extraordinary obligations which accompany extraordinary resources.*

~Mary Maxwell Gates to Bill & Melinda Gates  
at their January 1, 1994 wedding reception<sup>20</sup>

Standing on a beach in Hawaii with the excitement of starting a new year and a life together, Bill Gates and Melinda French exchanged vows and finalized what might be considered the most profound merger of their lives: their marriage. During this joyful celebration, Mary Maxwell Gates, Bill's mother, fêted her son and new daughter-in-law and reminded them of the responsibility they now shared to build on their values and "give back." Of course, it was mom who offered the leavening perspective; it is, however, doubtful that Mrs. Mary Maxwell Gates could have fathomed the global scope and outcomes Bill and Melinda Gates would generate in the first twenty-six years of their marriage.

Since that 1994 day in Hawaii, Bill and Melinda Gates have partnered on a number of personal and professional projects. Perhaps, though, one of the most profoundly significant outcomes is their emergence as philanthrocapitalism pioneers. Together, they have cultivated powerful and effective partnerships with valuable stakeholders and built an eponymous foundation with the aim of reducing global inequities. In doing so, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has become the exemplar

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<sup>20</sup> Gates, B., & Gates, M. (2020, February 10). Why we swing for the fences. Retrieved February 11, 2020, from <https://www.gatesnotes.com/2020-Annual-Letter>.



of philanthrocapitalism, ushering forth a new model of utilizing financial and social capital, combined with entrepreneurial spirit and vision, to address global inequity in many forms. Through these combined efforts, the foundation's initiatives deliberately and strategically focus on programming opportunities that have the potential to catalyze long-lasting and sustainable changes.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has identified strategic impact areas designed to coalesce around a mission of reducing global inequities. The foundation enacts a portfolio of diverse programming activities that not only help, but also inspire, individuals, communities, and other entities. In essence, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation demonstrates what Judith Butler (2010) might describe as the performative nature of philanthrocapitalism in action. Butler (2010) elucidates four conclusions of performativity: (1) performativity strives to counter presupposed frameworks of a particular positivism that restricts understandings of the state, economy and gender to one particular worldview; (2) "performativity works, when it works, to counter...metaphysical presumption[s] about culturally constructed categories" and demands attention to the "diverse mechanisms of that [cultural] construction" (p. 147); (3) performativity begins to describe the processes, or actions, that take place and call forth ontological outcomes or what Butler (2010) describes as "certain kinds of realities;" and (4) other ontological outcomes can "lead to certain kinds of socially binding consequences" (p. 147). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's programming efforts align with Butler's guidelines of performativity and are paradigmatic of the performative nature of philanthrocapitalism in action. Most notably, though, is that while the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation exemplifies the performative nature of philanthrocapitalism, it

also harkens to Jürgen Habermas’s theory of communicative action explored in Chapter 2.

Like Habermas’s theory of communicative action in practice, the Gates Foundation and its partners engage in the discursive sharing of rational validity claims to reach an agreed upon conclusion, or consensus, around a presupposed idea or set of guiding principles that creates a shared sense of meaning in the public sphere. Consensus is thus analogous to the foundation’s partnerships and mission, which also attend to Butler’s conditions of performative agency. Once the communicative agents arrive at a consensus through rational discursive exchanges, the agents can then work through additional rational processes and exchanges of validity claims to agree on ways to enact change. This process reinforces both Habermas’s notions of communicative agency and Butler’s conditions of performative agency. Functionally, then, the resulting plans are the strategic programming used to enact and fulfill the Gates Foundation’s mission to reduce global inequity.

Chapter 4 seeks to build on the foundations established in Chapter 2 that situated Habermas’s theory of communicative action as the philosophical framework or *why* of the larger project. The theoretical roots of the *why* permit the movement to *how* communicative action is put into practice through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as the paradigmatic exemplar of philanthrocapitalism. Chapter 3 elucidated the history, mission and guiding coordinates of the foundation situated within the Age of Transcendence. Within the philosophical framework (Chapter 2) and historical context (Chapter 3), this chapter overviews how the foundation operates and examines the Global Health, Global Development, and Global Growth & Opportunity Divisions, three of the

foundation's five programming divisions. These three divisions represent the biggest investments in capital, resources, programming and partnerships during the foundation's first twenty years. Each division operates as an umbrella and encompasses unique strategic programming and operational subsections to better focus and align actions, investments, and partnerships with appropriate resources, activities and evaluation with the goal of creating maximum global effects that contribute to reducing inequities in many forms. The last two programming divisions, United States Programs and Global Policy & Advocacy, will be included as part of Chapter 5, which also will address failures and setbacks the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has encountered.

After an explanation of how the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation operates, the five programming divisions will be ordered in subsequent sections as they appear on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's website detailing "What We Do." In accordance with the foundation's descriptions of "What We Do," the five divisions will be addressed as follows: Global Health; Global Development; Global Growth & Opportunity; U.S. Program; and, Global Policy & Advocacy. Global Health, Global Development, and Global Growth & Opportunity will be the focus of Chapter 4; United States Programs and Global Policy & Advocacy will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Overall, this chapter explores in more detail the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as the exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action. Additionally, this chapter contributes to the conversation of ideas in corporate communication scholarship by highlighting the various unique programming efforts of a global nonprofit organization guided by a clear and strategic mission to reduce global inequity. For example, and perhaps most importantly, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation does not employ a pejorative or

colonizing “one-size-fits-all” mentality, but it seeks to identify unique opportunities that demonstrate potential to yield maximum results.

The Gates Foundation’s programming divisions and subsections elucidate how a nonprofit organization of this magnitude can be both organized and effective around a central mission, or consensus point, that both shapes and is shaped by a shared sense of meaning to help others. In addition, the programming is customized based on various factors, including complexities, resources, partnerships and locations. As a whole, the foundation’s programming and areas of focus demonstrate different ways a central mission can effectively guide ideas and align strategies to great success. Moreover, most of the strategies implemented and executed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation can be tailored and/or scaled to meet the needs and resources available, as well as monitored and measured.

The five programming divisions of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation actionize the organization’s guiding mission and further highlight the diverse and meaningful practices of philanthrocapitalism in action. With a focus on the first three programming divisions, Global Health, Global Development, and Global Growth & Opportunity, the ensuing sections illuminate the important ways Bill and Melinda Gates work to heed the reminder Mrs. Mary Maxwell Gates offered on their wedding day.

### **“How We Work”**

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation strategically utilizes financial and social capital to tackle some of the world’s greatest challenges. To do so, the foundation and its valued partners and stakeholders work together to create deliberate investments, implement innovative programming, monitor and evaluate ongoing efforts, and advocate

and influence policy that can reduce global inequities. As described in the “How We Work” section of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s website, “all of our strategies—more than two dozen across the foundation—have emerged through this process of identifying what we want to accomplish for people and where we can have the greatest impact” (1999-2019). Furthermore, once the foundation clearly understands, identifies, and then commits to an area of need, the foundation and its partners work to define goals, and allocate resources to chart a clear path toward completion (How We Work, 1999-2019). This kind of vision and focus is emblematic of the philanthrocapitalist mindset to pursue innovative solutions that have potential for maximum impact.

Striving for maximum impact, the Gates Foundation relies on strategic partnerships for funding and programming to address a wide array of issues. Separately, the issues seem to have little to no connection. However, these issues “share the characteristics of being deeply rooted, dynamic and complex” and the foundation recognizes that the solutions of the issues will not come quickly, easily or without help. (How We Work, 1999-2019). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation embraces collaboration and cultivates relationships with partners and grantees “who join us in taking risks, pushing for new solutions, and harnessing the transformative power of science and technology” (How We Work, 1999-2019). Together, the grantees, partners and foundation work “in a spirit of trust, candid communication, and transparency. Our collective efforts also depend on support and resources of governments, the private sector, communities, and individuals” (How We Work, 1999-2019). Moreover, the understanding of shared responsibility and the power that comes through partnerships is reflected in the various ways the Gates Foundation works in the field. Much like most

successful marketplace for-profit brands, such as Microsoft, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation operates by building, maintaining and protecting valuable stakeholder relationships that align to meet one central strategic mission. In addition, trust, communication and transparency are vital elements to coordinate with stakeholders, develop strategy, execute programming, evaluate and monitor efforts, and create real, sustainable change.

In terms of strategy, five divisions exist to address a diverse array of global issues and opportunities. Within each division, strategy sessions take place to review data, develop goals and strategies, and set a direction before allocating resources and/or making investments (How We Work, 1999-2019). Thus, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation utilizes a praxis-oriented perspective. A deliberate approach of this type creates space for a multiplicity of ideas and insights as well as opportunities for consensus to emerge. The foundation recognizes the importance of difference voices in creating a shared vision and explains, “essential to this [strategy] process is ongoing dialogue with our grantees and partners—which is embedded throughout our strategy lifecycle” (How We Work, 1999-2019).

After developing the strategy coordinates, a four-phase process is utilized to develop all grants and contracts. The phases include concept development, pre-proposal, investment development, and, finally, management and close. The duration of each phase is dependent on numerous factors, such as the geographic location and the existing capacity of the potential partner, as well as the complexity of the proposed ideas and issues involved. At the conclusion of a project, the partnering grant recipient(s) will work with an assigned program officer to develop a final report, including a reflective analysis

(How We Work, 1999-2019). Not only does the final report contain expected results and outcomes, but it also incorporates a section on lessons learned so the foundation can adapt and grow from the experiences, both good and bad (How We Work, 1999-2019). This practice of analyzing lessons learned creates additional opportunities to engage in reflective learning.

In addition, grant funding is structured in ways that are financially sound, “while also funding partners for the cost of delivering results, supported by open and honest dialogue about the resources required” to gain a full and accurate understanding of the scope and total cost to execute programming projects both “efficiently and effectively” (How We Work, 1999-2019). Periodically, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation reviews its funding model to universities and other research partners to better “expedite global health research and to develop sustainable research capacity” (How We Work, 1999-2019).

Lastly, the Gates Foundation works with partners in the planning phases to define the overall results that they hope to achieve together, as well as the data needed to measure and evaluate the results. This approach is what the Gates Foundation calls “Outcome Investing” (How We Work, 1999-2019). Today, the Gates Foundation has invested in programming and partnerships across the globe and describes its approach very simply: “rather than look at the challenges that people face by region we identify challenges that can be tackled on a global level. We work with partners that can help to affect change globally and then scale solutions to a local level” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The global perspective and focus on partnerships to generate maximum impact are tantamount to the entrepreneurial spirit and risk-reward views of

philanthrocapitalism.

A final component of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's commitment to creating innovative programming to reduce global inequity involves safeguards to protect the ideas, strategies, innovations, tools and projects that result from the grants and partnerships. Termed *Global Access* by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the idea is to ensure that projects funded by the foundation, collectively deemed "Programmatic Investments" in the forms of grants, contracts, program-related investments, "and the resulting products, services, processes, technologies, materials, software, data and other innovations ("Funded Developments") will have positive impact on the beneficiaries served by the foundation's work" (Global Access Policy, 1999-2019). Furthermore, Global Access requires that any "...knowledge and information gained from a Programmatic Investment be promptly and broadly disseminated, and...the Funded Developments be made available and accessible at an affordable price to our intended beneficiaries" (Global Access Policy, 1999-2019).

The Global Access Policy (1999-2019) specifically highlights Global Health and Global Development programs and describes the beneficiaries as those people who are most in need, particularly in developing countries and within U.S. Programs, including low-income students, students of color, and first-generation college students, as well as the educational institutions and systems who work to serve and support those communities. The Global Access policy ensures that innovations or results derived from Programmatic Investments and Funded Developments are used to serve the populations most at need and to support opportunities that reduce inequities of human existence. This is especially important with regard to the Global Health Program Division.



## **Global Health Division**

Remarkably, a keen awareness and interest in global health has been at the forefront of Bill and Melinda Gates's philanthropic efforts from the very beginning. In fact, global health accounts for 29% of the \$53.8 billion spent by the Gates Foundation since its inception (Gates & Gates, 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020; Peters, 2020). The devotion to global health initiatives was publicly announced just a few weeks before Bill and Melinda Gates celebrated their first wedding anniversary. In December 1994, the couple announced that they would consolidate their philanthropic giving around two main interest areas—global health and community needs in the Pacific Northwest (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). This dual focus on global health and the community needs of the Pacific Northwest formed the basis of their newly created William H. Gates Foundation, which was seeded with an initial \$94 million stock gift, and functioned under the management of William H. Gates, Sr. (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The William H. Gates Foundation was the first iteration of Bill and Melinda Gates's philanthrocapitalism.

The contemporary version of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation resulted from the merging of the William H. Gates Foundation and the Gates Learning Foundation in 2000 (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). The goal of the merger was to create a philanthropic foundation “to build the right organizations, teams, and strategies to increase the efficacy of grantmaking” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019). As part of the efficacy measures, grant-making and programming was segmented into four divisions: global health, education, libraries, and Pacific Northwest (PNW). While education, libraries and Pacific Northwest have since been absorbed into other, large-

scale divisions over time, global health remains an ongoing priority for not just the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, but for Bill and Melinda Gates themselves.

In their 2020 Annual Letter celebrating the foundation's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Bill and Melinda Gates write of their shock at the staggering childhood death rates in low-income countries that easily could have been prevented by simple vaccines. The couple reflected, "when we first started working in global health, we were shocked to learn how many children in low-income countries were still dying ...it drove home for us that the challenges of poverty and disease are always connected" (Gates & Gates, 2020). Bill and Melinda Gates also realized there was a gap in global health that other entities and agencies were failing to address. They continue in the 2020 Annual Letter, "since this wasn't something that markets and governments were solving on their own, we saw an opportunity for philanthropic dollars to help" (Gates & Gates, 2020). As one of their first philanthropic projects, Bill & Melinda Gates partnered with the World Health Organization, the World Bank, and UNICEF to create Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance that "brings together governments and other organizations to raise funds to buy vaccines and support low-income countries as they deliver them to children" (Gates & Gates, 2020; Gavi 2020).

Gavi continues to be a major piece of the Global Health Division's programming efforts, and in 2019 the Gavi Alliance has helped to vaccinate more than 760 million children, preventing 13 million deaths, while significantly lowering prices for vaccines and supplies in the market (Gates & Gates, 2020; Gavi, 2020). To wit, the pentavalent vaccine that protects against five deadly infections formerly cost \$3.65 per dose is now less than one dollar (Gates & Gates, 2020; Gavi, 2020). Additionally, 86% of the world's

children receive basic immunizations, but, as Melinda Gates notes, “reaching the last 14 percent is going to be much harder...[because] children in this group are some of the most marginalized children in the world” (Gates & Gates, 2020).

As a highlight of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Bill and Melinda Gates celebrate Gavi’s success. They write, “we think going big on Gavi was one of the best decisions we’ve ever made—and we’re thrilled with the return we’ve seen on our investment” (Gates & Gates, 2020). The success of Gavi is the centerpiece of the Global Health Division, and it has grown to include nearly a dozen unique programming segments.

Today, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Global Health Division operates under the direction of President Trevor Mundel and continues to make significant contributions to finance relations, technology, infrastructure, and development. Specifically, the Global Health Division “aims to harness advances in science and technology to save lives in developing countries” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Furthermore, the Global Health Division strategically aligns and works with partners to “deliver proven tools—including vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics—as well as discover pathbreaking new solutions that are affordable and reliable” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Global Health Division also prioritizes innovation and views it as a leading way the Gates Foundation and its partners can bring health tools and interventions to the people and populations that are most in need (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Moreover, the Global Health Division exemplifies Bill and Melinda Gates’s ongoing commitment to Gavi Alliance and support of vaccine development and

distribution. Finally, the Global Health Division utilizes a broadscope approach to health and well-being as described by division president, Mundel who explains, “we invest heavily in vaccine[s] to prevent infectious diseases and support the development of integrated health solutions for family planning, nutrition, and maternal and child health” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Global Health Division programming responds to widespread and significant health issues with a goal of creating innovative solutions and maximum effects.

In fact, on March 10, 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced the creation of the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator, a \$125 million partnership with Wellcome and Mastercard (COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator, 2020). Together, the three committed up to \$125 million in seed funding to boost the response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The funding will be used to identify, assess, develop and upscale treatments for COVID-19. Moreover, the partners “are committed to equitable access, including making products available and affordable in low-resource settings” (COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator, 2020).

The vision for the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator is to “play a catalytic role by accelerating and evaluating new and repurposed drugs and biologics to treat patients with COVID-19 in the immediate term, and other pathogens in the longer-term” (COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator, 2020). On the day of the announcement, Gates Foundation CEO Mark Suzman (2020) wrote in *The Optimist*, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s e-newsletter, “We’re optimistic about the progress that will be made with this new approach because we’ve seen what can come of similar co-operation and coordination in other parts of our work to combat epidemics.” The Bill & Melinda Gates

Foundation continues to lead the charge to create a healthier world across multiple fronts, but all of the programming strategies and tactics align with the overarching goal of reducing and eliminating inequities.

The Gates Foundation's devotion to a broad array of health-related programming incorporates eleven specific programming areas, which will each be examined in upcoming sections. There are eleven programming segments that operate under the mantle of the Global Health Division: discovery & translational sciences; enteric and diarrheal diseases; HIV; innovative technology solutions; integrated development; malaria; maternal, newborn & child health discovery & tools; neglected tropic diseases; pneumonia; tuberculosis; and vaccine development and surveillance. Each of the eleven programming segments possesses its own unique identity that is explained through specific goals, acknowledgement of opportunities, a strategic overview, and diverse areas of focus. The eleven programming segments will now be individually evaluated.

#### *Discovery & Translational Sciences*

The first programming segment of the Gates Foundation's Global Health Division is Discovery & Translational Sciences. Described as an area of activity that works "closely with the foundation's other global programs, [the segment seeks] to channel resources into scientific discovery to create more practical versions of existing solutions and develop new solutions where needed" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Discovery & Translational Sciences goal is "to identify, support, and shape scientific research that can have the most impact and to accelerate the translation of scientific discoveries into solutions that improve people's health and save lives" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In essence, Discovery & Translational Sciences

aims to channel research and innovation into developing tools that can dramatically improve the quality of life and overall health of people who need help most. Examples of those tools include the following: preventative vaccines; drugs to treat and manage diseases; diagnostic tools, medical devices, and health-related interventions that maximize providers' abilities to improve overall health and quality of life (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

To meet the Discovery & Translational Sciences goal, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation seeks to coordinate efforts with other strategic global programs “to create and improve preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic interventions for infectious diseases, as well as other conditions that affect mothers, infants and children” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Specifically, the Gates Foundation looks to identify gaps in existing knowledge, create or implement new devices and innovations, and utilize technology platforms to more effectively and rapidly accelerate research (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To address the gaps, the Gates Foundation created The Grand Challenges in Global Health initiative in 2003 to particularly focus on the health and wellness problems in the developing world (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

In 2008, The Grand Challenges Program expanded to include the Grand Challenges Explorations to bolster even more cutting-edge approaches in specific health areas. Thus far, the Grand Challenges Programs “have awarded grants for early-stage research to more than 1,000 innovators in over 50 countries” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Grand Challenges Programs have created some of the most innovative and effective programming activities in the Global Health Division.

Furthermore, the Gates Foundation collaborates with the Grand Challenge partners, who include government agencies and other donor institutions, to “define areas of urgent need, foster collaboration among researchers, and build a global network of research initiatives and funders” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In many ways, the Grand Challenge partnerships created by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation represent one of the strongest examples of philanthrocapitalism in action. Lastly, the Discovery & Translational Sciences segment concentrates on four areas of focus: vaccine discovery, drug discovery, maternal and child health, and control of disease-transmitting mosquitoes. The four focus areas align with and also support additional programming areas in the Global Health Division.

#### *Enteric and Diarrheal Diseases*

According to statistics shared by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, gastrointestinal or enteric disease and diarrheal infections cause the deaths of over 500,000 children each year under the age of five, especially in the developing world (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Children who are afflicted and survive these diseases are significantly at higher risk of repeat infections by lingering gut pathogens that can lead to lifelong health problems (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This sobering reality motivates the Enteric and Diarrheal Diseases segment of Global Health.

The goal of the Enteric and Diarrheal Diseases segment of the Global Health Division is the belief “that all children—no matter where they live—should not suffer or die from enteric (gastrointestinal) and diarrheal infection” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Moreover, “our goals are to end diarrheal disease deaths in

children under 5 by 2030 and to eliminate typhoid as a public health problem by 2035” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These goals are particularly important geographically for children in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, many of whom live in densely populated, unsanitary and unsafe conditions that place them at significantly higher risk.

The driving strategy to eliminate diarrheal disease and typhoid deaths is to focus on vaccines that combat the leading causes of the diseases in low- and lower-middle-income countries. The Gates Foundation funds research on “the global and regional burden” of the diseases and tracks the growth and decline of each (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In order to effectively execute programming, three focus areas better help align and concentrate efforts.

The first focus area involves enteric vaccines, specifically vaccines for rotavirus, shigella, cholera, and typhoid. Shigella, cholera and typhoid are the leading bacterial causes of diarrheal and enteric disease (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The second focus area involves research efforts “to generate evidence that can help enhance our understanding of the burden, evaluate the impact of interventions, and plan future investment strategies,” largely in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Lastly, the Gates Foundation works in this Global Health Division segment to advocate for child health, welfare and overall well-being by making child health a priority at national and global levels (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This focus area is conducted in large part by supporting the goals of the integrated Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, &



Golston, 1999-2019). By partnering with local and global agencies, the Gates Foundation aims to reduce and eliminate the sobering statistics of children's suffering and deaths.

### *Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)*

While human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has been a major health concern since the 1980s, most developed countries have successfully created drug therapies and protocols to significantly treat the disease, thus mitigating the death sentence of the diagnosis. Unfortunately, in developing countries, the number of people infected with and dying from HIV and HIV-related illnesses continues to rise. In fact, “nearly 37 million people around the world are living with HIV, 25 million of them [living] in Sub-Saharan Africa” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Moreover, “Sub-Saharan Africa is the hardest-hit region, with more than 70% of the world's people living with HIV” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Alarmingly, approximately half of the people who have contracted HIV are not aware of their positive status (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The statistics demand attention, and the Gates Foundation's goal in the HIV segment of its Global Health Division is “to accelerate the decline of HIV infection worldwide and save lives by ensuring expanded and simplified HIV treatment and improved and effective use of interventions to prevent new infections” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To meet this goal, the Gates Foundation's HIV Program is working strategically to hasten the decline of HIV infection across the globe with particular attention to Sub-Saharan Africa.

The guiding strategy to accomplish the goal includes working to expand and

simplify HIV treatments while also working to improve and distribute preventative intervention tools. The Gates Foundation has committed more than \$3 billion in HIV grants to various global organizations and partners to date, as well as \$1.6 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Funding from the Gates Foundation is strategically directed to areas that will create maximum impact. Moreover, the financial investment from the Gates Foundation is just a small percentage of the global funding allocations to combat HIV. Thus, the Gates Foundation “concentrate[s] on areas where existing funds are insufficient, our support can have potentially catalytic impact, and we can assume risks that others may not be able to” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Working in partnership with government agencies in high-burden and donor countries, multilateral organizations, nongovernment organizations, academic institutions, community organizations and private industry, the Gates Foundation has identified the following focus areas: improving diagnosis and expanding treatment coverage; improving treatment retention; expanding the use of existing preventive measures; developing long-acting prevention measures; and, developing an HIV vaccine (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Through these combined efforts, the Global Health team works to bolster the treatment and prevention strategies to combat the spread of HIV.

#### *Innovative Technology Solutions*

The goal of the Innovative Technology Solutions segment is “to identify emerging technologies that have potentially transformative applications for global health” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This programming segment seeks to

identify and integrate innovative ideas and technological advances, such as artificial intelligence, sensor networks, mobile communications, bioengineering, and others in ways that can address major global health challenges. The Innovative Technology Solutions segment is uniquely situated within the Gates Foundation to draw on a global partner network, “including private industry and academia...[to] quickly assemble highly capable research teams and initiate projects to determine within a two-to-five-year period whether a particular technology is worthy of further investigation, investment, and adaptation” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The two-to-five-years timespan is far shorter than a typical timeline for testing and investigating feasibility for health or medical technologies. One reason the Gates Foundation and its partners can operate more swiftly is because they can make specific, short-term investments to ascertain the viability of applying technologies and innovations within target areas to catalyze maximum outcomes. In short, the Gates Foundation and its partners can execute a short-term allocation of assets that might be of higher risk than other research agencies and governments. The “swing for the fences” mentality tasked by Warren Buffett is also a hallmark of philanthrocapitalism.

Among the portfolio of projects within this segment are research projects to use DNA encoding to protect against viruses like HIV and Zika; engineering bone marrow-like B-cells to function as universal donor cells; developing a low-cost supplement to nutrient-dense and antibody-rich colostrum breast milk; utilizing antibody engineering to develop highly-sensitive, low-cost rapid diagnostic tools for a variety of infectious diseases, and more (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Another key function of this programming segment is connecting scientists, technologists and

innovators through the vast global network to collaborate at the highest levels.

### *Integrated Development*

The Integrated Development segment of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is described as a “solutions shop” that works with an array of Global Health projects within the foundation “to help troubleshoot complex challenges across all stages of the product development process” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Real need exists for this group because it works to streamline processes in produce development, adoption, scaling and distribution that might otherwise prevent life-saving products from entering the market, or at the very least, with severe and significant delay. The Integrated Development goal is “to strengthen regulatory systems and expedite the development, regulatory approval, and manufacturing of innovative new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, and devices that advance global health” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Moreover, the Integrated Development team works to troubleshoot complex challenges in areas “ranging from planning and clinical trial design to manufacturing and regulatory approval.” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The focus areas for Integrated Development are threefold: strengthening regulatory systems; data analytics for decision making; and, chemistry, manufacturing, and controls (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Integrated Development team seeks to create and leverage platforms for knowledge sharing and research analysis. Working with the vast network of global partners creates opportunities for researchers to draw on ideas, resources, and other innovative tools to accelerate the development rates and entry-to-market. Like all Gates Foundation partners and programs, the Integrated Development

team seeks opportunities and solutions to catalyze change with maximum potential for positive outcomes.

### *Malaria*

Malaria is one of the deadliest and most preventable diseases on earth. In developed nations, malaria has been eliminated for decades (Western Europe in the 1930s; United States by 1951) (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). However, the 2018 World Malaria Report, cited by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, found that more than 200 million people were infected with malaria 2017 (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Of the 200 million malaria cases, 435,000 people died and children under age five accounted for 60% of the deaths. Notably, 90% of deaths from malaria were located in Africa, and Southeast Asia also has a high infection rate (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has a simple goal: a world free of malaria.

Malaria is a disease caused by parasites that are transmitted by mosquitos. Malaria symptoms can mirror flu symptoms—high fever, chills, and severe anemia—and can be especially dangerous for young children and pregnant women. Malaria can cause lifelong intellectual disabilities as well as create a multibillion-dollar economic impact due to lost productivity and income (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Research indicates that the malaria death rate is declining. In fact, deaths from malaria have been reduced by half since 2000 (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). However, the malaria infection and death rates in high-burden countries in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have continued to climb (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The climbing rates in the high-burden countries are a

result of plateaued funding, insecticide resistance in some mosquito species, and a mutation of the malaria parasite that is no longer susceptible to the drug treatments currently available (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Thus, the Gates Foundation believes, “the only sustainable approach to addressing malaria is eradication of the parasite. Eradication is biologically and technically feasible with commitment and collaboration from global partners and affected countries, and ongoing investment in transformative new tools and strategies” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation is steadfast in its commitment to fighting the disease.

Malaria treatment and eradication is a top priority for the Gates Foundation. In 2018, the foundation updated its strategy to address “the areas in which we believe the foundation is best positioned, among a broad spectrum of partners, to be catalytic in reducing the burden of malaria and accelerating progress toward eradication...” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The revised strategy reinforces the foundation’s commitment to malaria as it “intend[s] to pursue a Pathway to Eradication that minimizes deaths due to malaria between now and the end of malaria” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The 2018 strategy revision highlights six pivot points that will drive the investment strategies and work efforts. Trevor Mundel, President of the Global Health Division, summarized the key strategy pivot points:

- Increasingly, work in high burden countries to rapidly reduce deaths through improved data-driven decisions and to build systems that will shorten the endgame. This is wholly aligned with the *High Burden to High Impact* initiative launched in November 2018 with the leadership of WHO and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria;

- Deepen our partnerships and collaboration with PMI, Global Fund, DfID, other leading donors and WHO to produce more coordinated support in service of affected country governments;
- Establish platforms to support next-generation surveillance and data use, with an emphasis on scaling genetic epidemiology to inform decision-making at every level and to determine how to get more out of tools and limited resources;
- Optimize coverage of chemoprevention through existing channels to save lives now using existing, proven tools;
- Test models that can scale access to – and quality of – care and medicines across public and private sector channels; and,
- Accelerate the number and pace of R&D for transformational endgame tools, acknowledging that what we have today won’t get us to eradication (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Primarily, the strategy remains to assume a higher level of risk that other agencies may be too vulnerable to face while concentrating resources—funds, partnerships, supplies—in the programming areas and geographic locations that have the potential to catalyze maximum in the fight to eradicate malaria.

Finally, three strategy goals delineate the pathway to eradication. Those three areas of focus include drive down burden, shorten the endgame, and get ahead of resistance (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). As the foundation notes, “ultimately, ending malaria will require transformative innovations...the current challenges of rising drug and insecticide resistance threatens the efficacy of existing tools. That’s why we are investing in the development of new tools and strategies to help

finish the fight” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The eradication of malaria has the potential to be a defining moment for the Gates Foundation as an example of what philanthrocapitalism in action can truly accomplish.

#### *Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Discovery & Tools*

Maternal, newborn and child health is a thread woven through each of the five Gates Foundation divisions in various ways. For the Global Health Division, the Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Discovery & Tools segment works to address issues related to nutrition and early/pre-term births particularly caused by underlying biological vulnerabilities and risks, such as intrauterine growth restriction preeclampsia, prematurity, stunting and wasting (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Often, the biological vulnerabilities and risks begin with the mothers during pregnancy and/or delivery, then they are transferred or shared with the baby. The goal of the Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Discovery & Tools segment of the Global Health Division is to “ensure that women and newborns survive and remain healthy before, during, and after childbirth by identifying and addressing underlying biological vulnerabilities” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This goal does seem within reach, but much work remains.

Inroads are being made to reduce the number of deaths related to pregnancy and delivery. For instance, childhood deaths have decreased by 43% and maternal deaths have declined by 29% since 2000 (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Nevertheless, in vulnerable, undeveloped geographic locations, such as Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the mortality rates are on the rise, in large part due to treatable and preventable diseases.



Thus, the Gates Foundation, through Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Discovery & Tools segment believes opportunities exist to prevent child and maternal deaths, but fresh ideas and perspectives are vital to drive a bold research and development agenda. The bold research agenda must function from an integrated perspective to look beyond developing just tools and treatments. The research agenda should be geared toward a focus on growth and resilience (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Moreover, the research agenda demands innovative and strategic guidance and ideas that can be effectively actionized.

The strategy to create and then execute the research and development agenda revolves around two primary principles: focused investments to research and address biological vulnerabilities instead of disease-specific conditions, and focused investments on conceptions to two years of age, which studies indicate is the most vulnerable time period for biological vulnerabilities to take hold or lead to death (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To achieve these outcomes, the Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Discovery & Tools segment has identified both an upstream and downstream area of focus to better coordinate efforts for maximum impact.

The upstream foci include investments in three specific areas: optimizing birth outcomes for mothers and newborns, supporting thriving in the community, and optimizing prevention and treatment of acute illness (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The downstream focus is “on aligning programmatic and advocacy investments to maximize health outcomes and strengthen primary care systems” that include new interventions, coverages and treatments, and advocating for faster adoption of recommended health and safety practices supported by evidence (Mundel, Elias,

Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). By integrating both the upstream and downstream focus areas, the Gates Foundation endeavors to reduce the mortality rate to meet the Sustainable Development Goal targets by 2030 and, perhaps more importantly, support the growth and resilience of mothers and babies across the globe.

### *Neglected Tropical Diseases*

Tropical diseases rarely generate the awareness, investments, and resources of other diseases, yet neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) affect “more than 1 [one] billion people in developing countries [who] suffer from infectious diseases that attract little donor funding” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The people afflicted by NTDs may face long-term effects like anemia, blindness, stunted growth as children, cognitive impairments, pregnancy complications, or even death. Thus, the NTD segment of the Global Health Division created a goal to “reduce the burden of neglected tropical diseases on the world’s poorest people through targeted and effective control, elimination, and eradication efforts” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Numerous strategies, including building awareness, are needed to meet this goal.

One step to combat the prevalence of NTDs was the creation of the London Declaration in 2012. The London Declaration represents a global coalition comprised of pharmaceutical companies, donors, endemic countries and non-government organizations who pledged to collaborate and work toward innovative treatments and eradication of NTDS (Uniting to Combat NTDs, 2020). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is a founding member (Uniting to Combat NTDs, 2020).

Together, members of the London Declaration “committed to control, eliminate or eradicate 10 diseases by 2020 and improve the lives of over a billion people” (Uniting to

Combat NTDs, 2020). The Gates Foundation's strategy to battle NTDs is designed to align with and complement the work of other organizations dedicated to the London Declaration. As the NTD section of the Gates Foundation's website explains, "we concentrate on areas where funds are scarce, where our support can have a catalytic effect, and where we are better positioned than others to assume risks" (1999-2019). To that end, the Gates Foundation has committed more than \$1.02 billion in grants to date, all to partnering organizations who are working to develop new tools and delivery methods to fight the spread of NTDs. The Gates Foundation also plays a role in advocating for additional international aid efforts, particularly funding.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation currently targets the 10 NTDs highlighted by the London Declaration, though the foundation's involvement and approach varies given the unique situations and challenges of each disease (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Thus, the Gates Foundation has streamlined its strategy into three focus areas: high-opportunity targets, integrated efforts, and the 10 diseases.

The NTD segment of the Gates Foundation's Global Health Division has identified seven specific NTDs of the London Declaration's 10 diseases that seemingly represent the greatest opportunities to eliminate and eradicate life-altering and deadly diseases. The seven diseases are the high-opportunity targets. The seven diseases the Gates Foundation is working to specifically eliminate or eradicate include onchocerciasis (river blindness); lymphatic filariasis, a mosquito-transmitted disease caused by parasitic worms; visceral leishmaniasis (black fever); soil-transmitted helminthiases (hookworm, roundworm, and whipworm); schistosomiasis; dracunculiasis (guinea worm); and human African trypanosomiasis (known as HAT or sleeping sickness) (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies,

& Golston, 1999-2019). The diverse methods used to attack the seven high-opportunity targets incorporate various programs, such as distributing current drug therapies, innovating and developing new drugs and treatment options, vaccines, diagnostics, and tailored investments and approaches (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This high-opportunity focus area is designed to maximize impact through catalytic change.

The second focus area specific to the Gates Foundation is called “Integrated Efforts.” Three main areas of attack are mass drug distribution, public health surveillance, and vector control (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The aim of the integrated efforts is to intensify the attention, resources and efforts toward eliminating and/or eradicating NTDS by utilizing methods that attack multiple infectious diseases at the same time (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In many ways, the Integrated Efforts represent the adage to work smarter, not harder, though the stakes to eliminate and eradicate NTDs are much higher.

### *Pneumonia*

The American Lung Association (2020) recommends rest and symptom management to treat most cases of pneumonia, with the addition of doctor-prescribed antibiotics for bacterial pneumonia. While complications and deaths do, unfortunately, still occur, pneumonia is a manageable disease from which most people recover. However, recovery is not the norm in the developing world. In fact, “pneumonia is the leading cause of death among children under age 5 [five], with more than 99% of those deaths occurring in the developing world” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Additionally, pneumonia-related deaths accounted for 1.3 million child deaths in 2011 and 18% of all child deaths across the globe (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The numbers are all the more staggering because medical interventions are available, but the poorest populations, concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, have limited access, at best. Thus, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Health Division has made a goal "to significantly reduce childhood deaths from pneumonia" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The work to achieve this goal is largely combined with the initiatives of "the integrated Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD), a 2013 effort formulated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF to accelerate disease prevention and control" and the GAVI Alliance, "a public-private partnership that funds vaccines for children in the world's poorest countries" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Through both financial and social capital demonstrated through the alliances and partnerships, the Gates Foundation endeavors to meet the goal to reduce, or perhaps someday eliminate, childhood deaths caused by pneumonia.

Lastly, the Gates Foundation's Global Health Division has set forth a programming agenda around seven priority initiatives. The initiatives include the following: pneumococcus, meningococcus, diagnosis and treatment, strategic information and advocacy, RSV, influenza, and risk factors (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). While many demographic groups stand to benefit from the efforts to reduce and eliminate pneumonia-related deaths, the Gates Foundation has placed primary emphasis on children under the age of five because these children have been identified as the most vulnerable population. By targeting young children, the Gates

Foundation and its partners hope to maximize opportunities for children to live long healthy lives, grow into adults, and create the greatest opportunities to reduce inequities. Basically, the aim is to give children an opportunity to not just survive, but to actually thrive and live a long and fulfilling life.

### *Tuberculosis*

The last specific disease targeted by the Global Health Division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is tuberculosis (TB). Significant strides in the fight against TB suggest reasons for optimism. From 1990-2014, the TB mortality rate declined 47%; from 1995-2014, 66 million TB patients were successfully treated and of those 66 million patients, 8 million people also received treatment for HIV (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Surprisingly, though, “TB remains a leading cause of death from infectious disease worldwide, with 10.4 million new cases reported in 2016” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Consequently, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Global Health Division created a Tuberculosis segment with a goal to “accelerate the decline in tuberculosis incidence” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Importantly, the TB team wants to better understand tuberculosis holistically. This means the Gates Foundation and its partners “are working to better understand the basic science behind the TB epidemic and support new tools for prevention, diagnosis and treatment, as well as the optimal delivery of TB care” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In order to solve the TB puzzle, additional investments, collaborations, research, and distribution methods are necessary.

An added challenge in the fight to understand and boost the global decline of TB

is the mutation of the disease. Two drug-resistant strains of TB have emerged in recent years that have sparked even more urgency to control the disease; both strains are even more difficult and expensive to treat (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Importantly, the TB epidemic and the spread of HIV seem to be working in tandem. Approximately 375,000 people died in 2016 from a TB/HIV co-infection (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). As a result of these developments, only about 50% of all patients with active TB disease are actively and effectively treated (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Consequently, the spread of TB and TB/HIV is accelerating at alarming rates.

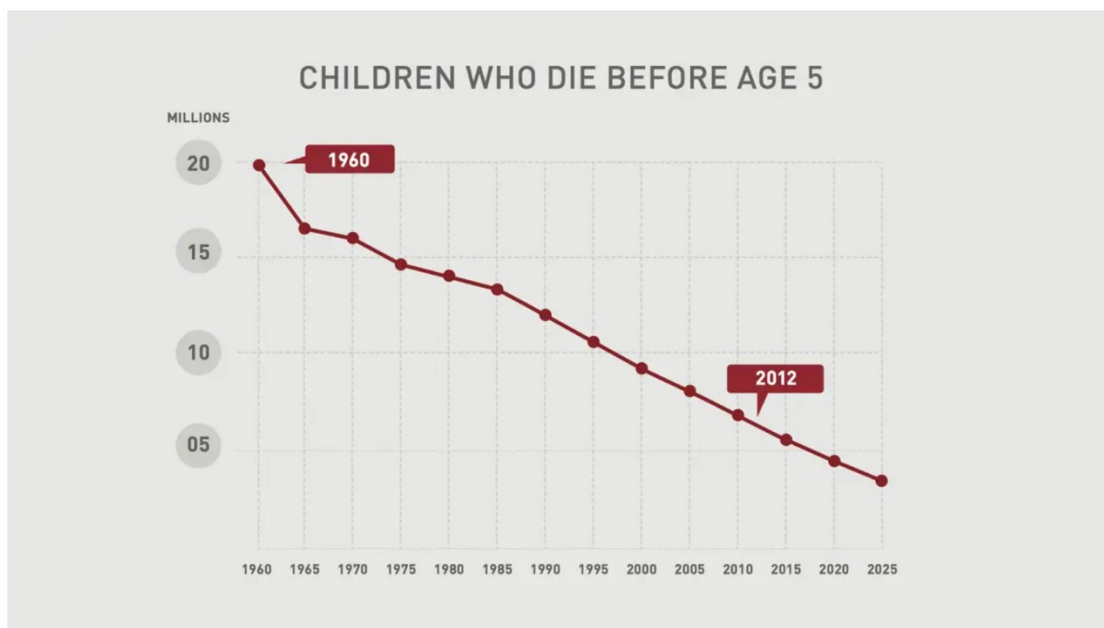
To direct strategies, investments, activities, and partnership efforts, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has committed to five focus areas: 1. more effective drug regimens; 2. new diagnostic tools; 3. improved vaccines; 4. innovative delivery approaches; and 5. advocacy (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). A deliberate approach rooted in research, innovation, collaboration, delivery, and advocacy stands the best chance to limit the rapid global acceleration of TB and TB/HIV deaths.

Reducing and, perhaps eliminating, the spread of tuberculosis could have significant and catalyzing effects that fulfill the Global Health Division's overarching goals to create "innovative, ambitious, and scalable solutions to address health problems that have a major impact in developing countries" and the larger Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation mission to reduce inequities. The efforts to reduce TB and TB/HIV infections and deaths are a powerful example of philanthrocapitalism in action, but also exemplify the Gates Foundation's mission that presupposes all lives have equal value.

## *Vaccination Development and Surveillance*

During a joint 2014 TED interview, Bill and Melinda Gates reflected on the various programming efforts of their eponymous foundation. When asked to select and share an infographic that explains their work, Melinda Gates selected an image about birth control and spoke about the implications for women's health, educational and economic opportunities, and the ways birth control can impact not only women but communities (Lillie, 2014). When the question turned to Bill Gates, he selected a chart that illustrated the decline of childhood mortality. Bill Gates's chart of choice is presented below in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1**



Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

*Decline of childhood death rate 1960-2014 (Lillie, 2014)*



As one might expect, the infographic Bill Gates selected included numbers, but, as he explained, the numbers told a powerful story. He said, “I like this graph. This is the number of children that die before the age of five every year. Around when I was born, we were at 20 million. We’re down to about 6 million” (Lillie, 2014). Bill Gates continued by explaining what he viewed was the most important reason for the decline of childhood deaths. He clarified, “this is a story largely down to vaccines. You want that to continue. The science is there. If we can invent the vaccines, get them out there, and get the delivery right, you can perform a miracle” (Lillie, 2014). The final, and arguably most catalytic, Global Health Division segment is vaccine development and surveillance.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation believes vaccines are one of the most powerful and formidable tools available to combat diseases and prevent deaths. Recognizing that all lives have equal value as a mission means recognizing that all lives deserve to be saved, especially when deaths caused by diseases can be prevented.

One of the centerpiece components of the Global Health Division has long revolved around vaccines. The goal of the vaccine development and surveillance segment is to “advance public goods for global health through technological innovation” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To do so, the foundation and its partners work relentlessly to accelerate “the development and commercialization of novel vaccines and the sustainable manufacture of existing vaccines” in alignment with “defining the global disease burden through better primary data and world-class modeling, and reducing the threat of epidemics through the development and use of innovative tools” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation takes a holistic approach to the research and development of existing

vaccines as well as innovating new vaccines and works to carefully understand the state of global health, especially women and children, to create diagnostics, models and other tools to support health, disease management and treatments, and overall wellness.

The vaccine development and surveillance strategies require investments in “expertise and platform technologies that help us make vaccines faster, better and cheaper. We also invest in education and training to ensure that knowledge around vaccine development and manufacturing is created, shared, and retained” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Some of the ways this strategy translates into specific tactics are adaptive trial designs, the streamlining of vaccine dosages and schedules, developing new delivery methods, and created modular, automated manufacturing platforms that can effectively produce small-batch vaccine production (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In addition, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has aggressively partnered with other organizations, non-government agencies, the private sector and governments to maximize vaccine creation and distribution efforts. Arguably the strongest example of this is the Gavi Alliance.

In addition to global partnerships, the Gates Foundation has identified four specific areas of focus to align vaccine development and surveillance efforts. The Vaccine Development and Surveillance team is structured into four separate domains: Vaccine Clinical domain; Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Control (CMC) domain; Surveillance domain; and Epidemic Preparedness domain. The four domains, working both separately and in concert as opportunities arise, have created significant impact in vaccinations and global health. In many ways, the financial and social capital that highlight philanthrocapitalism and its potential to create significant catalyzing effects are

most evident in this work on vaccines.

The Global Health Division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation features myriad unique programming strategies, focus areas, partnerships, investments, technologies, opportunities for maximum impact and even some failures (to be addressed in Chapter 5). That being said, the relentless pursuit to improve the health and well-being of the world's citizens on a global level has been evident since the earliest days of Bill and Melinda Gates's philanthrocapitalistic endeavors. As Bill Gates noted in the 2020 Annual Letter, "global health will always be a core focus of our foundation. This work will only become more important in the future, as climate change makes more people susceptible to disease." The Global Health Division's goals remain lofty as a result of the pervasive optimism Bill and Melinda Gates and other organizational leaders embrace. Moreover, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's mission is ongoing, but there is no doubt that global health will continue to play a prominent and defining role in the decades to come.

### **Global Development Division**

For the first 20 years of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Global Development has been a significant focus of attention. It has been a leading priority and garnered the largest individual percentage of funds to address large-scale global issues causing or contributing to inequity. As Bill and Melinda Gates note in their 2020 Annual Letter, "The goal isn't just incremental progress. It's to put the full force of our efforts and resources behind the big bets that, if successful, will save and improve lives." The Global Development Division leadership team is a critical component to the Foundation's mission and "oversees the foundation's work in developing countries on family health,

vaccine delivery, and emergency relief” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). As such, global development accounts for 45% of the \$53.8 billion in funding allocations over the first 20 years of the Foundation (Gates & Gates, 2020). The total allocation of assets can be reviewed the previous chapter.

The Global Development Division operates under the guidance of President Christopher Elias who heads a team of cross-functional leaders with diverse expertise and skills necessary to address an array of global challenges. The Global Development Division “focuses on improving the delivery of high-impact health products and services to the world’s poorest communities and helps countries expand access to health care” (Gates Foundation, 2019). With over \$24 billion in funding, the Global Development Division was poised to make significant impact to the Gates Foundation’s mission to reducing inequity.

As described on the Foundation’s website (2019), the Global Development Division’s overall goal “aims to identify and fund the delivery of high-impact solutions that can reduce health inequities and give everyone the opportunity to live healthy, productive lives.” Like all of the Foundation’s programming segments, global development demonstrates a unique blend of programming activities and partnerships designed to execute sustainable solutions in a variety of specific areas.

Understanding the power of strategic relationship-building is evident in the division’s basic description that states, “We work closely with our partners to support innovative approaches and expand existing ones, so they reach the people who are most in need” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These strategic partnerships broaden the scope of global development problems and solutions the Bill and Melinda

Gates Foundation can work to address.

Moreover, segmenting the Global Development Division into seven unique subsections further streamlines the processes and programming executed under this organizational umbrella while still providing opportunities for addressing issues in an integrated fashion across multiple programming segments. The seven Global Development Division subsections are emergency response; family planning; global delivery programs; global libraries; maternal, newborn & child health; nutrition; and polio (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Each subsection has its own unique identity that incorporates goals, acknowledgement of an opportunity or opportunities, a strategic overview, and areas of focus.

#### *Emergency Response Program*

The goal of the Emergency Response Program is “to reduce suffering and save lives in regions affected by natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and complex emergencies” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In light of the fact that “more than 300 natural disasters have occurred each year over the past decade,” the Emergency Response Team highlights the inherent challenges of addressing emergencies, since emergencies happen every day across the globe and take many forms, including both natural and man-made disasters (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation describes emergencies as “circumstances [that] can range from catastrophic rapid-onset natural disasters and disease outbreaks to slow-onset crises such as food shortages, drought, and gender-based violence and displacement of populations due to war and civil unrest” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Adequate, rapid responses are critical because these emergencies

“affect thousands of communities around the world, leaving people in urgent need of help to survive and recover,” but a disparity of media coverage about the wide range of global emergency situations can limit awareness and responses.

Because of the onslaught of global emergencies, both of the rapid- and slow-onset varieties, prevention advances might be eradicated or significantly hindered in the planning and implementation phases, which reduces the resilience of communities and makes them vulnerable to additional emergency situations. This can result in not only ongoing response needs, but a sense of emergencies as the “new normal” for communities and people (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation works to mitigate this “new normal” and “reduce suffering, disease, and death in countries affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

In addition, efforts are also directed to improve the speed and performance of first responders during the immediate emergencies and the most critical hours that immediately follow (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Among those strategies is collaboration across other Foundation efforts “to develop and introduce innovative products and approaches that can save lives and build community resilience before an emergency occurs” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

The Gates Foundation’s emphasis on emergency responses and first responders is demonstrated through the financial investments the Foundation makes to support prevention and reaction strategies so affected communities can “build back better” and be stronger than before the emergency situation took place (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). As such, the Emergency Response subsection of Global

Development encompasses three specific areas of focus: emergency relief; strengthening the capacity of first responders; and, learning and innovation. Each of the strategic areas of Emergency Response are designed to support communities in the prevention and aftermath of disaster and to build stronger, resilient communities throughout the world.

### *Family Planning*

Family Planning is the second sector under the Global Development Division. As an area of special interest for Melinda Gates, the Family Planning subsection has a goal “to bring access to high-quality contraceptive information, services, and supplies to an additional 120 million women and girls in the poorest countries by 2020 without coercion or discrimination” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Moreover, the Family Planning subsection of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has a long-term goal to create “universal access to voluntary family planning” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This goal was created with the intention of elevating women and children out of situations of disease, poverty, and situations that create the perpetuation of generational cycles.

Family planning and the use of contraceptives is a controversial topic with cultural, social, political, economic, educational and other implications. Nonetheless, as the Foundation (2019) notes, “more than 200 million women in developing countries who don’t want to get pregnant lack access” to contraception, and the steeply declining rates of contraception availability and use in extremely impoverished countries is creating ongoing burden for resources basic to human life.

Notably, “less than 20% of women in Sub-Saharan Africa and barely one-third of women in South Asia use modern contraceptives” and an estimated 80 million women in

developing countries had unplanned pregnancies in 2012 with at least 25% choosing unsafe abortion options (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). As a result of this startling research and other information, the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning created a global partnership called Family Planning 2020 (FP2020). The FP2020 coalition is comprised of governments, foundations, international agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector who pledged to collaborate in order to “dramatically” expand access to voluntary family planning (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). FP2020 has worked together to create opportunities for outreach, education, innovation, and greater accountability.

The Gates Foundation has identified five areas of focus for the Family Planning segment: accelerate country action; strengthen policy and advocacy; monitor performance and promote accountability; closing knowledge gaps; and, invest in new contraceptive methods (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These focus areas are designed to address issues around women’s overall health across many stages of life, family planning, and HIV prevention.

Moreover, the Family Planning sector of Global Development supports the ongoing efforts to reduce inequity in multiple ways, especially since “every dollar spent on family planning can save governments up to six dollars that can be spent on improving health, housing, water, sanitation, and other public services” that contribute to the overall wellbeing and health of communities (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Through Family Planning strategies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s efforts have the potential to create long-term and far-reaching solutions and generate resources that support an array of global needs and institutions.



### *Global Delivery Programs*

Global Delivery Programs is the third Global Development segment. This segment of Global Development has a goal “to improve the delivery of health products and services and promote child system innovations so countries can significantly reduce maternal and child mortality, improve disease control, and advance health equity” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Working in concert with programming in the other Global Development sectors, Global Delivery Programs evolved from Bill and Melinda Gates reading of a young child’s death in 1997 as a result of rotavirus (Tierney & Fleishman, 2011), a disease killing over half a million children in the developing world.

In essence, Global Delivery Programs seek to generate “more health for the money” by recognizing the lack of funding, technical expertise, institutional capacity and market intelligence encountered and encumbered by low- and middle-income countries (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Because of these lacking resources, the low- and middle-income countries face a scarcity of basic health services and are simply unable to afford programming to address the maternal and child mortality rates or enact efforts to control infections, yet treatable, diseases (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This challenge has spurred the Global Delivery Programs team to focus “on helping health systems significantly improve their performance and expand the reach and impact of products” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Currently, more than 10 teams are working to solve delivery challenges for approximately 90 different products that will generate “more health for the money.” The products include vaccines and contraceptives, as well as other drugs, and diagnostic tools

(Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Importantly, this subsection of Global Development programming also seeks to empower women with greater agency since women are largely recognized as primary caregivers in homes and care-related career fields.

To accomplish the overall goal of the Global Delivery Programs, four areas of focus have been created. The four focus areas are: health funds and partnerships; health products, programs and markets; health systems; and, strategy and insights. As a whole, these four focus areas are integrated to deliver the strategic outcomes needed to make a sustainable impact on many ongoing global health and wellness issues.

### *Global Libraries*

Literacy skills and accessibility to libraries and information have been a hallmark of Bill and Melinda Gates's philanthropic work since the earliest iterations of the foundation that bears their name. Viewed by Bill and Melinda Gates as an "equalizer," literacy and accessibility have the potential to transform the lives of children and adults. Global Libraries was among the first program segments to gain funding and execute programming. In fact, grant funding for free internet access in United States public libraries was one of the first grants made in 1997. Because of the division's long-term commitment and results, its work ended in 2018 "after more than 20 years of strategic investment and support for public libraries" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Global Libraries generated far-reaching effects by including 50+ countries, involving thousands of library leaders and stakeholders, and building strong relationships and support with government at all levels (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-

2019). In all, over 280 million people across more than 320,000 global libraries benefitted from the financial commitment and sustained efforts of the Global Libraries Division (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

While the Global Libraries group concluded its work in 2018, five needs and opportunities were identified as critical for public libraries to sustain. Indeed, these five public library opportunities and needs must be met “in order [for public libraries] to be embraced—and funded—as the critical community assets they are” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

The five public library needs and opportunities are: progress depends on collaboration; change demands new leadership; support grows with clear alignment with community needs; proof of impact; and develop partnership at all levels (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Libraries must be funded, remain current, and must build and maintain important partnerships “to reach their full potential as centers of learning, creativity, and community development, libraries need staff skilled in information technology, partners providing services for users, and supportive networks providing resources such as broadband connectivity” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Libraries must continue to address these five areas of need and opportunities in order to retain their value, recognition and funding as vital community hubs.

#### *Maternal, Newborn & Child Health*

The Maternal, Newborn & Child Health sector of the Global Development Division closely aligns with the work of the Family Planning and Global Delivery segments. However, a distinction of the Maternal, Newborn & Child Health Division

emphasizes a goal “to ensure that women and newborns survive and remain healthy before, during and after childbirth, including by identifying and addressing underlying vulnerabilities to poor health” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This Division and goal is a direct result of a gruesome statistic: approximately 800 women die each day from preventable causes and complications of pregnancy and childbirth; this number has decreased by 44% between 1990-2015 but the target is an annual 6-9% reduction in mortality rate by 2030 (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Furthermore, 2.6 million babies are stillborn while another 2.6 million die within the first month of life as a result of prematurity, delivery complications, and infection (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These numbers are particularly concentrated in high-burden, low-resource communities across the globe.

Thus, the Maternal, Newborn & Child Health sector has a vision “in which healthy mothers deliver healthy babies, receiving quality care from skilled and well-equipped health care workers” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). As the Division works to realize this vision, the Foundation continues “to invest in efforts to better understand and develop products to address underlying vulnerabilities and promote resilience among women and children” through innovative products and practices (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). A vital aspect of meeting the Division’s goals is the strategic partnerships with governments, bilateral agencies, multilateral organizations, civil society, the private sector, and other Gates Foundation programs to support funding and programming across the globe. Another important component is utilizing resources, including partnerships and visibility, to influence policy changes.

The focus areas for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health are unique. One area is a downstream approach to maximize investments and strengthen systems to “focus on aligning programmatic and advocacy investments to maximize health outcomes and strengthen primary health systems” as well as work with partners to manage and assess data, inform policies, and identify opportunities to “maximize health financing to support program implementation” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The downstream approach also includes the development of standard indicators to better measure health targets that will better advise the development of planning, monitoring and decision-making related to the Division’s and partners’ ongoing efforts.

The second focus area is described as an upstream approach that directs investments in three strategic areas: optimizing birth outcomes for mothers and newborns; supporting thriving in the community; and optimizing prevention and treatment of acute illness (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Additionally, the Strategic Data Analysis & Synthesis initiative works to gather data and monitor activities to better determine impact and cost-effectiveness for new tools and activities (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Together, the downstream and upstream focus areas work in concert to support the ongoing needs of Maternal, Newborn, & Child Health.

### *Nutrition*

As part of a concentrated effort to address challenges to global health and well-being, especially for women and children, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation includes a Nutrition Division as part of this portfolio of Global Development programs. Ultimately, the goal of the Nutrition Division is “to ensure that all women and children

have the nutrition they need to live healthy and productive lives” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This division and its goal are important because research shows that approximately 45% of children’s deaths under age five are a result of nutrition issues; moreover, approximately 25% undernourished children who survive the immediate threat of death often have long-term physical and cognitive impairments (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Unfortunately, the funding sources cannot meet the demand to fully address the nutrition issues that exist primarily in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Less than 1% of global foreign aid is directed to nutrition as part of larger global health and development funds and activities (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). By investing in proven strategies and working on innovative ideas, the Gates Foundation is working to address the global nutrition shortages.

Ultimately, the long-term goal is for women and children to have the nutrition necessary to live healthy and productive lives. To meet that goal, the Nutrition Division has identified five focus areas to guide its work: country impact; new solutions; food systems; data, analytics, & evidence; and policy, advocacy, & alignment (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). By diligently focusing efforts in these five strategic areas, and in cooperation with other Global Development Divisions, the Nutrition Division aims to reduce inequities caused by a lack of basic food and water resources and draw greater attention to the issues surrounding nutrition deficits on a global scale.

### *Polio*

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation boldly states, “polio eradication is one of our top priorities...we have a unique ability to contribute by taking big risks and making

nontraditional investments” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Foundation has been a major supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) for nearly the entirety of the its 20-year existence. When the GPEI was created in the 1988, polio cases could be found in over 125 countries and children were b paralyzed as a result of the disease at a rate of nearly 1,000 children daily (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Since the creation of the GPEI and the implementation of its vaccination efforts, nearly 3 billion children have been vaccinated and polio has decreased by almost 99% (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These impressive statistics suggested significant steps to the eradication of polio, but that has now changed.

Since 2008, polio outbreaks have been reported in 20+ countries and sometimes with multiple outbreaks in one country. Increasing challenges to reaching unvaccinated children include security risks, geographical barriers, and cultural obstacles. Importantly, rising costs to produce and distribute the vaccine now cost nearly \$1 billion dollars annually, which is not sustainable (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In light of the ballooning costs and increased barriers, the number of reported polio outbreaks has continued to climb.

To address these issues, one example of a newly successful program facilitated by the Gates Foundation has involved strategic partnerships, investments in additional vaccine research, and the creation of emergency centers in Nigeria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Additionally, eight focus areas have been identified to guide the Divisions work to maximize funds and partnership efforts, particularly the ongoing work with the GPEI. Those focus areas include polio

vaccination campaigns; routine immunization systems; surveillance and monitoring; product development and market access; data-driven decision making; containment policy; transition planning; and, advocacy and communications. In partnership with GPEI, the Gates Foundation continues to identify new ways to work toward the shared goal of polio eradication. Despite encountering setbacks, discussed in an upcoming section, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation remains committed to this goal as part of its bigger efforts to impact Global Development.

Undeniably, the Global Development Division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has strategically executed programming and built partnerships to identify and create solutions that threaten inequity on a global scale. While Global Development accounted for the largest percentage of the Foundation's funds over the first twenty years, other Divisions have also made significant impact. Global Development is perhaps the strongest indicator of philanthrocapitalist efforts by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that combine financial and social capital to generate large-scale change. Yet, other programming divisions also exist that strive to embody the Foundation's guiding belief that all human life has equal value and its overall goal to reduce global inequity.

### **Global Growth & Opportunity Division**

The third division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is Global Growth & Opportunity. Operating within the Gates Foundation's guiding mission to reduce or eliminate inequity, Global Growth & Opportunity has aimed its focus on the plight of the poor with an interest in the market circumstances that have created poverty conditions. The division "works to catalyze sustainable transformative change in the face of inequities and market failures" that have created conditions for poverty and endeavors "to



realize the potential of untapped markets, and to see the economic and social benefits of including everyone” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The emphasis on inclusivity underlies the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s overarching goal to reduce inequity, and this division highlights the disparate economic conditions of various groups and economies.

The Global Growth & Development Division attends to the fact that global poverty is caused by a multitude of factors. In fact, poverty is such a worldwide issue that nearly 2.5 billion people live on less than \$1.90 USD daily (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To provide some context, according to the United States Census Bureau’s July 11, 2019 report on World Population Day, the global population was estimated to reach 7.58 billion people later that month; 2.5 billion of those 7.58 billion people living in poverty represents approximately a third of the total world population. To address those startling poverty rates, the Global Growth & Opportunity Division operates under the direction of Rodger Voorhies, division president, and his team who all operate under the guidance of the executive leadership team (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Global Growth & Development seeks to identify and create innovative solutions to the market conditions that perpetuate poverty.

Moreover, Global Growth & Development is guided by the belief that people are impoverished because markets simply don’t work for them. As such, the division team “promote[s] innovative products and policies that can break down barriers to economic opportunity, to help people lift themselves out of poverty, and to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth that benefits everyone” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To better understand the conditions that create these circumstances and to chart

progress, the division utilizes data and measurement to identify trends and causes of poverty and to develop effective evidence-based solutions that can be adapted to scale for implementation by global partners (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To meet the division goals, the four focus areas for Global Growth & Opportunity are agricultural development; gender quality; financial service for the poor; and, water, sanitation and hygiene (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Each of the four programming focus areas possesses a unique identity with goals, a keen awareness specific goals or challenges, a deliberate strategic overview, areas of focus, and partnerships.

#### *Agricultural Development*

The goal of the Agricultural Development segment of Global Growth & Opportunity focuses primarily on sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia “to support country-led inclusive agricultural transformation” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Four strategies drive a holistic and inclusive approach to meeting the goal. The four driving goals include work with smallholder farmers to increase agricultural productivity and outcomes; boost overall income for smallholder farmer households; improve availability and equity for ongoing, affordable and safe diets and nutrition; and better support and empower women in agriculture (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). While these strategies represent strong guideposts, key challenges exist that might prevent progress toward achieving the overall goal.

The Global Growth & Development Division highlights numerous economic, social, educational and resource challenges related to meeting the Division’s ambitious outcomes. Chief among those challenges are smallholder farmers’ productivity, climate

change, and barriers to market entry or engagement that limit potential profits. Additional challenges are directly related to nutrition and food access, including inadequate or failing systems that prevent ongoing nutritious food supplies or profit-making market opportunities and broken food systems and declining supply chains that prohibit the ongoing production and sustainability of a nutritious, year-round food supply. Lastly, the division recognizes the inequitable opportunities and scant resources for women to be part of decision-making processes and have active roles in the agricultural system and household as a whole (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These challenges demand an insightful strategy to drive progress and maximize impact.

To address the challenges to agricultural development, a three-pronged approach has been utilized to drive impact and increase opportunities for success. The division first emphasizes partnerships to support *global public goods* (new products, tools, technologies, and systems) in ways that encourage inclusive agricultural transformation (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The second strategy seeks to build *country systems* unique to the specific issues and situation of countries to develop innovations through national, private, and pre-existing partnerships. The third prong of the strategic approach involves an investment in *farmer impact* in both public and private sectors to maximize and scale partnerships that work together to effectively boost services and opportunities for smallholder farmers to succeed and be sustainable (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Each of the strategic investment areas are directed to countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, but also strives to incorporate both regional and in-country efforts grounded in individual contexts and

situations to bolster sustainable agricultural transformation that attends to multiple human needs (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). All of the division's efforts are coordinated via public, private, and development partners and donors.

Finally, to support agricultural transformation regionally and globally, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Growth & Opportunity Division identified specific areas of focus that represent a holistic portfolio approach to agricultural transformation. The areas of focus are enabling country systems in both Africa and Asia; seed systems and varietal improvement (SSAVI); crop discovery and translational sciences; livestock; nutritious food systems; global policy and advocacy; policy and data; and digital farmer services (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

An additional focus area is devoted to women's empowerment and includes a range of activities to reduce gender gaps, provide support and encourage women in decision-making and entrepreneurial roles through two complementary bodies titled Integration and Gender Data and Evidence. The women's empowerment focus reinforces the division's ongoing research and belief that women can uniquely and powerfully generate sustainable, transformative agricultural development when given the resources and support to take an active voice and role. These four focus areas coalesce to meet the Division's larger goal to support inclusive agricultural transformation with maximum impact.

#### *Financial Services for the Poor*

In many ways, the Financial Services for the Poor (FSP) directly connects with the goals and tasking of the Foundation's Agricultural Development activities. Financial services for the poor attends to the upward mobility of people who are transitioning out

of poverty. Notably, this pertains to the more than 1.2 billion people worldwide who have been introduced to financial tools such as bank and mobile-money accounts in the last six years (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Nevertheless, another 1.7 billion people remain outside the realm of financial well-being and without the same basic tools (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). By excluding people from access to basic financial services and tools like savings, credit, insurance and payments, the poverty cycle continues to grow and perpetuate across generations (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The FSP Division was created in direct response to this exclusion, which features a disproportionately higher rate of women.

The goal for the FSP program is to support “government and private-sector partners in a shared effort to establish financial services for the world’s poorest” so that these financially excluded populations can “build more prosperous and secure lives for themselves, their families, and their communities” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). An important feature of the FSP division is creating and providing tools, innovations, digital technology and changes in national policy to ameliorate the barriers to financial independence.

The FSP strategy is primarily focused in expanding the reach and availability of low-cost digital financial services and tools for the poor. To build financial inclusivity, different considerations of accessibility and capital need to be considered, especially because the poorest conditions still involve barter or cash-based systems. FSP strategies are designed to maximize what is described as “the most catalytic approaches to financial inclusion” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The FSP strategies primarily involve accelerating the development of digital payment systems to rapidly

increase the accessibility and available of digital financial services (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Special attention is focused on gender equality, financial inclusivity, and empowering women as active financial participants (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation also works to build support for policy changes and advocacy at national and regional to create models that can be scaled for global adoption in the poorest areas (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Additionally, the FSP strategy also involves deliberate capital investments in financial inclusion initiatives and activities that can be utilized with maximum effect. Currently, the FSP project has identified Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, and East Africa as most likely to benefit from capital investment as well as partnership activities.

Importantly, the FSP's goal is *not* developing specific distribution methods like a product or channel, but in expanding accessibility and conducting research to determine what current tools and resources are most effective to elevate the poor into basic standards of living in whatever forms that might take. In this way, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the FSP “recognize[s] that countries are at different stages of developing inclusive digital financial systems, and...approaches must reflect the distinct needs of their economies and citizens” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In other words, a one-size-fits-all approach or model will not be successful.

Thus, the FSP areas of focus are designed with adaptability of scale and need in mind. The FSP division works to support four focus areas: payments infrastructure; increasing use of digital financial services; regulation and risk management; and driving

women's financial inclusion and economic empowerment (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The FSP division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation embraces these four focus areas with attention to developing unique solutions that do not colonize or marginalize. Like the overall Gates Foundation, FSP efforts are working to create large-scale global changes with maximum impact to reduce or limit inequities that exist as barriers to financial well-being and prohibit global citizens from leading healthy and productive lives.

### *Gender Equality*

A strong connecting thread that weaves through many of the divisions, focus areas, and overall efforts of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is a recognition of the vital role women play in building individual, community, regional and global well-being at all levels. Women, however, are often marginalized or minimized simply on the basis of gender and long-ingrained cultural and social norms of what women should and should not be able to achieve, earn, do and contribute. In an attempt to change the tide, a diverse array of programming activities supports an ongoing awareness and effort to support gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender equality has made significant strides across generations, but significant biases and barriers still exist. Some of the most powerful barriers are related to health and education, labor and income, and even, in the most severe locations, a woman's right to exist beyond her reproductive abilities. Women are, largely, unequal and underrepresented and this creates ongoing cycles of poverty and inequality (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Fewer resources and more challenges exist that prevent women, and often children, from rising out of poverty and thriving. This has

powerful social impact as research indicates that the “global economy would grow by an estimated \$28 trillion by the year 2025 if women participated in the economy” with equal access, resources and opportunities as men (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

To offer some perspective, The Economist’s global debt clock started tracking global debt in 2012. Currently, the global public debt stands at just over \$58 million (The Economist, 2012-2020). The estimated \$28 trillion economic boost, driven by women’s participation in economic endeavors and activities, has the potential to eliminate nearly half of the total global debt, if economic growth and debt rates remain consistent (The Economist, 2012-2020). Notably, many of the Gates Foundation’s strategies and programming activities are aimed at limiting or reducing inequity in the geographic zones that carry high debt loads with potential for limiting the debts through maximizing programming resources and outcomes. Limiting or eliminating gender inequality and empowering women has the potential to eliminate nearly half of the global debt.

As a powerful show of commitment toward gender equality and its potential for positive impact, leaders representing 193 nations committed to actively support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 and work toward ending all forms of gender inequality worldwide by 2030 (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This pledge represented the first time that global leaders recognized and prioritized global gender inequality (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Similarly, women are actively coming together for the first time, finding and using their collective voices to bring awareness of the inequities they face and demanding systemic changes in powerful, meaningful ways.



The Global Growth & Opportunity Division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in accordance with global leaders, recognizes the varying depths, degrees and ways gender inequality exists and is enacted. However, this coalition also recognizes that “harnessing economic power is a consistent and tangible thread” in its work to empower women and address gender inequality (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Indeed, this work must be done deliberately and with great care.

With that level of care in mind, the Division’s strategy has emerged from the guideposts placed by other partners, governments, and leaders who share the same vision to reduce and eliminate gender inequality. Importantly, the Gates Foundation “did not start from scratch...[and] builds on the important work of [their] partners” to further cultivate efforts toward gender equality (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The aim of the “gender equality strategy is on transforming the way the poorest women and girls participate in economies” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Thus, the Gates Foundation and its partners created *A Conceptual Model of Women and Girls’ Empowerment* to support individuals, organizations, governments and other potential partners in the ongoing efforts to fight gender equality (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 1999-2019). The Dynamics of Transformative Change Model, part of the larger *Conceptual Model of Women and Girls’ Empowerment*, highlights resources, agency, and institutional structures as the driving components required to support gender equality through innovative programming and partnerships.

Moreover, the Dynamics of Transformative Change Model represents the three focus areas of the gender equality work within the Global Growth & Opportunity division. Those focus areas are financial inclusion, support and connection, and

opportunity (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 1999-2019; Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Helene Madonick leads the strategic work in these focus areas as interim director within the larger Global Growth & Opportunity division, and the division has already made gains toward gender equality in India, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Together with their partners, the Gates Foundation is working to utilize the lessons learned from work within these four countries to create ongoing programming, more partnerships, and expand the work to benefit women and girls throughout the poorest regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Together, these public and private entities are working toward meeting the 2030 goal to end gender inequality, thereby restoring agency and contributing to global economic and social well-being.

### *Water, Sanitation & Hygiene*

The overall goal of the Global Growth & Opportunity Division is to address conditions that create and reinforce poverty. Chief among those conditions is creating healthy, clean environments for all people, but especially women and children, to live and grow. Like all of the Gates Foundation's efforts, the programming is designed to help others survive the conditions of poverty and create opportunities to rise above those conditions to eventually thrive.

The Water, Sanitation & Hygiene segment is organized around the vision to “enable widespread use of safely managed, sustainable sanitation services, contributing to positive health, economic, and gender equality outcomes for the world's poorest” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). This vision is in direct response to the

fact that more than half a million deaths resulted from unsafe or inadequate sanitation and hygiene conditions in 2016 alone, and an estimated 4.5 billion people in the developing world lack basic options for the safe disposal of human waste (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Additionally, the lack of global sanitation costs an estimated \$223 billion worldwide each year (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These startling problems and costs remain unabated and, in fact, are on the rise as the global population continues to grow.

The need to create systems for clean water and basic hygiene and sanitation services is viewed as an imperative component of building sustainable and healthy economies that permit people to rise out of poverty. This goal can be a challenge, however, especially when creating sanitation infrastructure. Notably, “creating sanitation infrastructure and public services...isn’t a one-size-fits-all proposition” because seemingly simple solutions, like toilets, sewers, and wastewater treatment plants are not necessarily the best solutions in poor countries or dense urban settings (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Solving the problems related to water, hygiene and sanitation will require technological innovations and practical, cost-effective systems that can be easily scaled and replicated (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). That being said, the potential for significant benefits in human health, economic growth, and overall human dignity underscore the value of basic water, sanitation and hygiene.

Strategically, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation “collaborate[s] with government leaders, the private sector, and technologists to advance promising new...technologies, service delivery models and policies with the greatest potential” for maximum and revolutionary impact at both local and national levels (Mundel, Elias,

Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To put this strategy in practice, the Gates Foundation invests in four specific and complementary grantmaking areas: developing and commercializing transformative sanitation technologies; transforming how cities can provide safe, reliable and inclusive sanitation services; policy and advocacy; and measurement, evidence, and dissemination, for scale (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Special attention is directed toward the most severely limited geographic regions, particularly in densely populated areas of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Importantly, the programming in this area must be relatable, scalable, and appropriate to the people it is designed to serve, with emphasis placed on women and children, to uplift impoverished or vulnerable populations.

Examining three specific programming divisions—Global Health, Global Development, and Global Growth & Opportunity—highlights the diverse ways the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation strives to reduce inequity, preserve human dignity, and elevate poor and vulnerable populations to a basic standard of living. The work remains ongoing. Mark Suzman, who took over as CEO in early 2020, notes in *The Optimist*, the Gates Foundation’s aptly titled e-newsletter, he is “convinced that with the right approaches and the right partnerships the foundation can have an even more profound impact over the next decades that it had in the previous two” (Suzman, 2020). The continued focus on innovation and partnerships to generate maximum results will drive the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and its work well into the future.

## **Implications**

Bill and Melinda Gates are leaders, visionaries and philanthrocapitalism pioneers.

They heeded the reminder of Bill's mother on their 1994 wedding day, but also used that reminder as a catalyst to work for global change in ways never before considered.

Together, Bill and Melinda Gates have forged a new path in philanthropy and their foundation has become the model of a new paradigm that combines entrepreneurial vision, powerful financial and social capital, vast networks of partners and teams, and a guiding mission to reduce the world's inequities in innovative ways.

By examining the Global Health, Global Development, and Global Growth & Opportunity Divisions, the three largest and most-developed divisions of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the determination and scope of the organization's programming becomes both clear and also daunting. Undeniably, there are very real structures and power in place, but those strategically and deliberately coalesce around the simple recognition that all lives have equal value and the work needed to help elevate others to live healthy, fulfilling lives.

This chapter highlights examples of various programmatic strategies utilized by a global nonprofit organization to effectively align its efforts, build strategic partnerships, enact deliberate programming around identified focus areas, and monitor and evaluate to discern the successes and setbacks. It is the hope that the three global divisions provide coordinates for ideas and activities that can be scaled and adapted for other organizations to maximize impact.

A final goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation exemplifies philanthrocapitalism in action situated within corporate communication. From a corporate communication perspective, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation builds key stakeholder relationships and valuable partnerships through

integrated communicative practices that not only introduce and align internal and external stakeholders to the foundation's mission, vision, and values, but also invites and encourages those stakeholders to become active brand ambassadors and advocates through the strategic programming activities they all work to execute together with a shared goal to generate maximum impact and global change. Hopefully, these ideas will function as meaningful coordinates so that others might be inspired to do more, be more, and help others.

Admittedly, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is not perfect. The upcoming chapter will examine the remaining two programming areas—U.S. Program and Global Policy and Advocacy—but will also importantly explore some of the pitfalls, setbacks and failures the foundation has faced. Importantly, the next chapter will attempt to bring the various pieces of the project together in a meaningful way to better understand the breadth, depth and scope of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, how it has succeeded, failed and learned, and how the foundation has emerged as not only a leading nonprofit organization, but as the exemplar of a new paradigm, philanthrocapitalism in action.

## Chapter 5: Philanthrocapitalism in a Global Marketplace

*Love is the most powerful and underused force for change in the world...For me, love is the effort to help others flourish—and it begins with lifting up a person's self-image.*

~Melinda Gates, *The Moment of Lift*<sup>21</sup>

In her 2019 book debut *The Moment of Life: How Empowering Women Changes the World*, Melinda Gates shares stories, insights, and lessons learned from nearly twenty years spent at the helm of one of the world's largest nonprofit organizations. She writes using equal parts hard statistical evidence and warm anecdotal recounting. Her data sources are both statistical models and projections and conversations shared sitting on dirt floors, by creek beds, in huts and schools, during birth and death ceremonies. One profound theme intertwines Melinda Gates's stories—to uplift the world, we must uplift women. As Gates writes in the *Introduction*, “That is why I had to write this book—to share the stories of people who have given focus and urgency to my life. I want all of us to see ways we can lift women up where we live” (M. Gates, 2019). Dr. Brené Brown, fellow *New York Times* bestselling author, describes *The Moment of Lift* as a “call to courage” and, with its relentless pursuit of global equality, the same might be said of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In many ways, the aim of this dissertation project is much the same—to highlight stories and examples, both quantitative and qualitative, of ways that a global nonprofit has worked to generate sustainable global change, to *lift up* people, especially women, where we all live.

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<sup>21</sup> Gates, M. (2019). *The moment of lift: how empowering women changes the world* (First Edition). New York, NY: Flatiron Books.

Deliberately, the project also attends to a powerful shift in the marketplace that reframes the ways philanthropic giving and programming take shape. Philanthrocapitalism is a paradigmatic shift that expands the good works of organizational corporate social responsibility and reimagines the strategic, global impact a nonprofit organization can generate when the leadership and vision of entrepreneurial enterprise combines with unparalleled financial and social capital to create long-term sustainable social changes. Together, Bill and Melinda Gates helm an eponymous nonprofit organization and have catalyzed a movement rooted in the recognition that all lives have equal value.

Working in collaboration with key partners like Warren Buffett, William H. Gates, Sr. and partnering organizations, agencies and governments worldwide, Bill and Melinda Gates have channeled their entrepreneurial vision and problem-solving skills, as well as financial resources and personal and professional networks, to champion causes under the mission of reducing global inequity. In doing so, these self-described impatient optimists have also become the leading philanthrocapitalist pioneers. They have created a foundation that exemplifies the performative nature of what philanthrocapitalism in action can accomplish.

From a scholarly viewpoint, this project aims to contribute to the ongoing body of literature that examines the intersections between philanthropy, corporate social responsibility and the powerful emergence of philanthrocapitalism as a new paradigm. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation also typifies what can be accomplished when a nonprofit organization effectively enacts strategic corporate communication strategies and practices. Corporate communication functions at strategic leadership levels to coordinate and align all internal and external communication efforts—including both



identity and image—by building, protecting, and maintaining a strong organizational reputation and relationships with valuable stakeholder groups (Cornelissen, 2017). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation exemplifies what a centrally focused, mission-oriented nonprofit organization can accomplish when the valuable stakeholder groups become not only brand supporters, but actively engaged agents of change who enact programming worldwide. From a marketplace viewpoint, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is a large-scale nonprofit organization that accomplishes its mission and objectives on a global magnitude but in ways that can also be scaled and adapted for other environments. The scope of the foundation’s funding, partnership networks, and global programming elevates it beyond basic notions of corporate social responsibility. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the paradigmatic exemplification of philanthrocapitalism in action.

Overall, this project draws on the works of Jürgen Habermas and Judith Butler to illuminate copious examples that position the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as the exemplar of philanthrocapitalism, which is an elevation of corporate social responsibility situated within corporate communication scholarship and practice. In doing so, the project also seeks to provide coordinates that other scholars, consultants and practitioners might draw on or scale in nonprofit development. Ultimately, the heart of this project attends to the question posed in Chapter One: what will you do for others? The answer, as offered by philanthrocapitalist pioneers Bill & Melinda Gates and the foundation that bears their name, is not only a call to action, but a call to courage to uplift others and help them rise. The moment of lift holds potential to help us all.

The overview of this chapter is as follows: while Chapter Four examined the Global Health, Global Development, and Global Growth and Opportunity Divisions,

Chapter Five concludes the investigation of individual programming divisions by surveying the United States Program and the Global Policy and Advocacy Divisions to highlight key rationale points, goals, strategies, and focus areas of each. Then, noteworthy setbacks and failures the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has encountered in its twenty-year history will be examined. This section endeavors to provide balance to the litany of accomplishments and positive outcomes the Gates Foundation has achieved by recognizing the missteps, failures, critical moments (Coletti, 2017) and opportunities to learn.

### **United States Program**

The fourth division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is United States (U.S.) Program. With a holistic and inclusive approach, the U.S. Program Division seeks to create opportunities for learning and education from childhood through entry into the workforce with skills necessary to live a sustainable quality of life. The Gates Foundation describes its U.S. Program Division as having a “primary focus on ensuring that all students graduate from high school prepared for college and to have an opportunity to earn a postsecondary degree with labor-market value” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Financially, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has allocated 16% of its total \$53.8 billion in programmatic spending over the first twenty years to programs and initiatives in the United States (Gates & Gates, 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020; Peters, 2020).

Similar to previously examined programming and strategies in other divisions, the goal of the U.S. Program Division is to implement and execute initiatives designed to be transformative in order to best maximize the potential for positive outcomes. This

approach is designed in terms of a “catalytic role—to support the development of innovative solutions in education that are unlikely to be generated by institutions working alone and that can trigger change on a broader scale” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Like other programming segments, the U.S. Program Division seeks partnerships with a variety of teachers and educators at all academic levels, from pre-school to post-doctorate. Interestingly, the U.S. Program Division, particularly the education initiatives in common core math, technology, and professional development, is where some of the Gates Foundation’s biggest setbacks and failures have occurred, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

In addition to educational programming and activities, the U.S. Program Division also contains specific initiatives to target issues of inequity and poverty exclusively in Washington State. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is headquartered in Seattle, Washington and the Gates family has called Washington State home for generations (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The U.S. Program Division is arguably the most localized programming in the entire Gates Foundation.

The U.S. Program Division is under the leadership of Allan C. Golston who serves as president of the Division. In that role, Golston is tasked with leading the Gates Foundation’s “efforts to advance student achievement for all young people in the United States” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The U.S. Program Division revolves around four specific program segments: K-12 Education; Economic Mobility and Opportunity; Postsecondary Success; and, Washington State. The rationale, goal, strategies, and areas of focus for each program segment will be reviewed in detail in the forthcoming sections.

## *K-12 Education*

The Gates Foundation stalwartly believes that a strong educational foundation established in the primary grades that continues through high school graduation has the power to create transformative effects for both individuals and communities. Education, then, is one of the cornerstones to the Gates Foundation's strategies to lift children out of poverty. Because the leaders of the Gates Foundation are "impatient optimists," they recognize the gains that have been made in education gains, but also admit, "more must be done. Progress hasn't come fast enough for many students" particularly minority students from black and Latino communities and those who are low-income (Gates & Gates, 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020; Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Thus, the K-12 education sector of the U.S. Program Division has the goal to "significantly increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who earn a diploma, enroll in a postsecondary institution, and are on track in their first year to obtain a credential with labor-market value" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Strategies, programming, and partnerships are well underway to meet the goal.

Notably, the Gates Foundation acknowledges the following successes in the U.S. Program: fourth-grade reading and math scores in large city schools improved at rates nearly double the national average of public schools; eight-grade math and reading scores have improved at even higher rates; and high school achievement and graduation rates are steadily increasing (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). However, despite the improvements, the graduation rates for minority and low-income students significantly lag behind White students and the overall percentage of high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary institutions has stagnated (Mundel, Elias,

Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Thus, more opportunities must open and changes must occur.

To address these inequities, the Gates Foundation envisions “a public education system that expands opportunity for all students...and allows them to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the workplace” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These efforts are particularly important for the Black, Latino, and low-income demographic groups where those inequities are still most prevalent.

Additionally, the Gates Foundation’s educational programming initiatives align with activities in other programming sectors to directly support the low-income and minority students who are most vulnerable and likely to fall behind.

Moreover, the K-12 Education initiative operates under a model that recognizes two main factors that must be combined for student success. The first guidepost for success recognizes that “teachers [must] have standards-aligned instructional materials, real-time assessments for gauging student progress, and in-school learning and leadership opportunities” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Second, principals are called on to ensure those in leadership roles are encouraged and empowered to create an environment for success that is data-driven and offers opportunities that “continuously improve the supports, instruction, and learning students experience” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation supports an inclusive approach that integrates students, teachers, principals and other key stakeholder groups who are integral to student success.

Education is recognized as “a bridge to opportunity” and the K-12 strategy is focused on helping schools create and maintain standards of excellence that have

potential for student learning, achievement, and transformation. Thus, the Gates Foundation invests in teachers and leaders to provide the tools and training for success, as well as “networks of schools to solve common problems using evidence-based interventions and data-driven approaches to support continuous learning” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Lastly, the K-12 strategy is focused around seven priorities: networks for school improvement; educator preparation; high-quality charter schools; aligned-instructional materials; social emotional learning; stronger pathways; and big bets in innovation. Collectively, the seven priorities are the core of the programming initiatives designed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to transform education in the United States. Interestingly, the K-12 Education initiatives have resulted in some of the strongest pushback and even setbacks the Gates Foundation has encountered. The educational programming setbacks and more will be discussed in a forthcoming section.

### *Economic Mobility and Opportunity*

The second programming sector of the U.S. Program is Economic Mobility and Opportunity and it builds on the Gates Foundation’s earliest U.S. programming efforts to help United States libraries offer free internet access. Over time, additional initiatives in K-12 learning, university education, and, in some states, preschool were added (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). While undertaking this yeoman’s work, the Gates Foundation and its partners learned that some of the greatest obstacles to learning and opportunity have little-to-nothing to do with the classroom or education itself.

Many of the barriers standing in the way of learning and educational achievement are related to institutional racism, sexism, socio-economic disparity, geography, and other

basic demographic factors. As a result of the barriers, socioeconomic mobility become severely. The lack of mobility and student achievement is demonstrated by the fact that 90% of children born in the 1940s would eventually earn more annual income than their parents (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Over the course of four decades, the number has declined significantly. Only 50% of children born in the 1980s would earn annual income than their parents (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The decline in earning potential across generations indicates a formidable shift and suggests that mobility from poverty is deteriorating at alarming rates (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

To combat the declines in economic mobility and opportunity, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a \$158 million commitment over four years with a goal to “ensure more people everywhere are working on increasing mobility from poverty, and [to] provide them with the information and tools they need to succeed” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The primary uses for the Gates Foundation’s financial investment are to provide better support for people and programs working on poverty and mobility issues so they can be more efficient and effective. The Gates Foundation believes there is opportunity to catalyze profound change in ways that will “enable more Americans to climb the economic ladder and improve their lives” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Guiding this work are five focus areas “where we hope to help others expand and extend their work” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The five areas are closing data gaps; empowering local actors; improving coordination and leverage; work and opportunity; and increasing public understanding.

### *Postsecondary Success*

The third programming segment of the U.S. Program Division is Postsecondary Success. With a belief that “a college education is the gateway to the American middle class” the Gates Foundation has a goal “to ensure that all students who seek the opportunity are able to complete a high-quality, affordable postsecondary education that leads to a sustaining career” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Notably, the programming of the postsecondary success works in concert with other U.S. Program sectors, particularly Economic Mobility and Opportunity, since those who earn college degrees typically earn as much as 65% more over a lifetime than those with only a high school education (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

The biggest challenge in this sector is the ever-increasing education costs in terms of both students’ tuition and fees and the pressures and expenses colleges and universities face. Remarkably, “the cost of higher education continues to rise faster than any other cost in the United States, including healthcare, while state funding for student financial aid has steadily decreased” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Moreover, a staggering 40% of college students will withdraw from school for an extended period of time or drop out altogether before degree completion. The potential impact of this phenomenon on a skilled workforce is tremendous.

Consequently, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has already established two programs that support the Postsecondary Success goal: College-Ready Education and Postsecondary Success. -Ready Education focuses on supporting students for high school graduation by ensuring they are adequately prepared for college and success in a future career. The goal of Postsecondary Success “is to dramatically increase the number of



young people who obtain a postsecondary degree or certificate with labor-market value” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). There are several intersections between these two programs, particularly regarding practical approaches and policy standards to align K-12 standards and learning outcomes with the learning standards and readiness requirements in higher education (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

A strong emphasis on partnership in the Postsecondary Success sector requires alignment of interests, investments, programming and initiatives, and ultimately, outcomes. To strategically guide programming and maximize potential for catalytic changes, five focus areas are in place. Investments in the five focus areas are intended to help higher education in the United States become more personalized, flexible, clear, and affordable in collaboration with institutional partnerships across the country (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation also hopes that the partnering institutions will, over time and with success, become models for other educational partnerships and institutions to scale and adopt. Creating opportunities for maximum impact that can be scaled and implemented elsewhere is paramount to both the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and philanthrocapitalism as a whole.

### *Washington State*

While the Foundation maintains a commitment to bring about change on a global scale, the Gates family does not ignore their own backyard. Headquartering the Gate Foundation, Washington State has been the home of the Gates family across multiple generations and represents the final programming segment of the U.S. Program. With a goal to “create opportunities for all children in Washington state—regardless of their

race, ethnicity, income, or gender—to reach their full potential” strategies and programming initiatives in this segment of the U.S. Program Division aim to address the widening socioeconomic gaps that are the root cause of inequity in the Gates family’s home state (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The strategies of the Washington State programming sector seek to build partnerships and create opportunities for children to grow up in stable, safe and nurturing environments with a holistic focus address children’s social, emotional, academic, and development needs from the earliest stages (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

In addition, Washington State programing efforts are specifically designed to catalyze transformative change by leveraging the industries that drive Washington’s economy—technology, science, health, and international trade—which will, in turn, gain the benefits of a prepared and skilled workforce as children grow into adults (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Thus, the Gates Foundation has made a commitment to support children in every part of life, specifically in the home, community, and school (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To do so, the Gates Foundation and its strategic partners work to reduce inequity and spur opportunities in five focus areas: early learning, education, a road map project, family homelessness, and strengthening communities (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Importantly, the family homelessness component is guided by three principles: prevention and diversion, coordinated entry, and rapid re-housing (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Lastly, the Washington State programming initiatives also extend into aspects of the other global programming divisions through the interactions and engagements of the

Gates Foundation's employee base. The Gates Foundation explains: "Our Seattle-based employees are engaged members of our hometown, and participate as citizens, parents, and volunteers" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Notably, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, its employees, and partners contribute \$1.5 billion annually to the Washington state economy (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The commitment to the local programming efforts aligns with the Gates Foundation's overall mission to reduce inequity and the philanthrocapitalism tenet of maximizing impact. As part of a larger strategic effort to uplift the U.S. Program Division, that in turn affects the global programming divisions, the Washington state opportunities contribute to a larger global impact. In sum, the local, state, national, and global outcomes are inherently linked.

### **Global Policy and Advocacy**

The fifth division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is Global Policy & Advocacy. In many ways, this division is the final piece of a comprehensive strategy that combines a clear mission and vision—the why—with programming, policy and advocacy—the how—to ultimately generate sustainable and transformative changes—the what—meant to uplift others in meaningful, dynamic and powerful ways on a global scale. Essentially, the Global Policy & Advocacy Division recognizes that resources, even money, global and local partnerships, vaccines, toilets, diagnostic tools, innovative technologies and models are not enough on their own. The foundation describes the Global Policy & Advocacy Division simply:

because our resources alone are not enough to advance the causes we care about, we engage in advocacy efforts to promote public policies that advance our work, build strategic alliances with governments and the public and private sectors, and foster greater public awareness of urgent global issues (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

In order to advocate and influence policies at maximum levels, the Gates Foundation has created an integrated structure of teams tasked with advocacy, policy analysis, media and communications, and government relations (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The multifunctional teams operate globally and are attached to a variety of specific programming sectors previously discussed.

Moreover, there are also teams functioning in the Global Advocacy and Policy Division working to strengthen philanthropic partnerships and relationships in the charitable sector within the United States and internationally. The Gates Foundation works in close collaboration with their offices in the United States, Europe, China, India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa to enact and catalyze change to maximum effect (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Three specific programming target areas, or segments, are situated within the Global Advocacy and Policy Division. Those three program areas are tobacco control; development policy and finance; and a global education program. In the following sections, each of the three programming sectors will be examined in more detail.

### *Tobacco Control*

The United States and various nonprofit organizations have long battled against the tobacco industry and the addictive nature of its products. Despite these efforts,

tobacco addiction and reliance remain a lucrative global industry. Because “worldwide, more than one billion people use tobacco products...[and] tobacco use is the world’s leading cause of preventable death, with nearly six million people dying of tobacco-related diseases each year,” the Gates Foundation has devoted Tobacco Control programming and policy resources to fight the powerful global tobacco industry. , Part of the staggering death toll includes more than 600,000 nonsmokers who die annually from exposure to secondhand smoke (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Current trends suggest that by 2030, more than eight million people will die as a result of tobacco use and 80% of those individuals will be in the developing world (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Based on the current population reported by the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), more than 1% of the world’s total population will die as a result of tobacco use and/or exposure by 2030 if the trends persist at the current rate.

Current research suggests that tobacco use is stagnating in higher-income countries in the developed world, but tobacco use has rapidly accelerated in low- and middle-income countries. Alarming, “tobacco industry revenue continues to climb, and aggressive marketing of tobacco products in the developing world is increasing, often directed at women and children” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Additionally, the tobacco industry has long wielded tremendous power and influence on public policy while simultaneously funding relentless advertising, promotion and sponsorship campaigns to encourage awareness, trial and adoption or dependence on its products (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, through the Global Policy & Advocacy Division, supports the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and supports partners in more than 30 countries

in Africa and Asia to fight what it terms a “tobacco epidemic” The battle against tobacco is being waged by a global alliance.

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) was adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2003 and is the world’s first and only global public health treaty. The FCTC includes 179 signatory countries—many of which are low- and middle-income where tobacco use and deaths are statistically higher than average—who have pledged to enact minimal tobacco control provisions (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The tobacco-related death rates are often higher in many of the 179 FCTC countries because other health issues are higher priority and demand more attention and resources. Critically, the measures outlined in the FCTC agreement have proven both successful and cost-effective “in reducing tobacco use in higher-income countries and have the potential to significantly advance tobacco control efforts in low- and middle-income countries” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation (1999-2019), in collaboration with the FCTC, has identified Africa, China, and Southeast Asia as geographic locations with great potential to catalyze change with maximum effect.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Tobacco Control program has deployed a strategy that addresses the myriad challenges to combatting tobacco use, addiction, and deaths. Notably, the Gates Foundation is “supporting a well-coordinated network of strategic partners who are based primarily in regions where we work...and who are able to effect change through effective sub0-grants and efforts to build the capacity of civil society organizations and governments” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In order to execute this programming, the Gates Foundation has committed nearly

\$210 million since 2008 to partners working in 30+ countries in Africa and Asia (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). One high-profile partnership is Bloomberg Philanthropies<sup>22</sup> with whom the Gates Foundation strategically coordinates tobacco control efforts in Asian communities and countries while also supporting “highly complementary efforts in other geographies” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

Together with partners, the Gates Foundation Tobacco Control program has identified policy interventions and building the evidence base as the two specific focus areas for maximum impact (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Notably, the Gates Foundation acknowledges the vital role of clinical smoking cessation “in limiting overall tobacco-related death and diseases and we applaud the efforts of other organizations in this area...and other needs in tobacco control, such as considering alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and addressing cross-border smuggling” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). While the Gates Foundation does not identify clinical smoking cessation as one of its focus areas of investment, the Tobacco Control program does monitor all tobacco-related issues closely and considers them holistically when evaluating the strategic allocation of funds as part of the battle against global tobacco-related deaths (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Tobacco Control program also works in concert with initiatives in the Global Health Division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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<sup>22</sup> See Bloomberg.org Group. (2020). Bloomberg Philanthropies. Retrieved March 15, 2020, from <https://www.bloomberg.org/>.

## *Development Policy and Finance*

One of the greatest struggles most nonprofit organizations face is funding. Largely thanks to the efforts of strong donor relationships, like the one with Warren Buffett, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is financially solvent to tackle large-scale global issues and to provide financial support to myriad global partners and organizations. The foundation acknowledges its unique philanthrocapitalistic positioning and abilities to affect global change. In large part, this work is done through the specific programming segments previously discussed, but the Development Policy and Finance sector of the Global Policy & Advocacy Division further aligns and supports the programmatic aims by working to influence policy changes, investment practices, and governmental decision-making processes.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation describes the Development Policy and Finance sector in ways that harken to the most basic tenets of philanthrocapitalism: “Improving the lives of the world’s poorest people requires significant financial commitments and spending available funding in the most effective and creative ways possible” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Moreover, drawing on these funds to execute programming requires vision and leadership. The foundation explains that the challenges to help the world’s poorest people “demands more than business as usual on the part of the major public, private and nongovernmental [NGOs] entities that support the fight against extreme poverty and health inequities around the globe” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). These challenges compelled Gates Foundation to attend to the needs of a Development Policy and Finance program.

The goal of the Development Policy and Finance Program is “to accelerate



progress in advancing human development and alleviating extreme poverty by enabling evidence-based public policymaking at the global and national levels—through research, ideas, and innovations” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). To meet that goal requires one tremendously important resource that is often lacking in many nonprofit and NGO activities—money. As the opportunity section of the Development Policy and Finance landing pages notes, “global ambition to eradicate extreme poverty—and the inequities that go with it—has largely been higher” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Moreover, the awareness of these issues and a desire to help exists. The foundation further explains that funders and other partners “are eager to work with countries, technical experts, civil society organizations, and citizens to deliver on that vision, and all of these parties are hungry for the data, analysis, innovation, and ideas that will help make it a reality” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

To leverage the opportunities and meet the program goals, the Development Policy and Finance team coordinates with partners to learn from experts, create partnerships, and understand the impact of policies and financing decisions that impact international health and development to strategically propose and execute ideas that could accelerate progress. The Development Policy and Finance team also “supports research and analysis that can lead to new policy ideas and financing innovations” and draws on new evidence and the Gates Foundation’s own unique experiences to assist internal teams working to advance their efforts in policy and financing (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

In efforts to coordinate and better catalyze and maximize outcomes, the Gates Foundation “team works with donor governments, developing country governments,

multilateral development banks, and other development experts” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Foundation also provides strategic direct financial support by providing grants to agencies and institutions, including universities, think tanks, and research and policy institutions. Notably, the Gates Foundation also draws on the “the foundation’s convening ability and leadership voice to support our partners’ analysis and ideas and to support the launch of promising innovations” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Development Policy and Finance teams, operating as part of the larger Global Policy & Advocacy Division, has identified three focus areas to strategically balance and align its projects. Those three focus areas include aid policy, multilateral finance, and country finance (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

A significant example that demonstrates the capability of the Development Policy and Finance programming sector involved convening an independent commission of 25 leading economists and health experts to develop a framework for achieving major health gains in global health (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers and Dean Jamison, University of Washington Professor of Global Health led what was named The Lancet Commission on Investing in Health (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Lancet Commission offered a plan titled *Global Health 2035: A World Converging within a Generation*. The Lancet Commission’s *Global Health 2035* plan is guided by a fundamental mission to reduce deaths from infectious disease and maternal and child morbidity to universally low levels while yielding a huge economic return on investment, by doubling global health spending within the context of smart fiscal policies,

effective interventions, and new tools (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Development Policy and Finance teams, operating as part of the larger Global Policy & Advocacy Division, typifies many of the ways philanthrocapitalism in action can effectively create sustainable global change.

#### *Global Education Program*

The last programming sector of the Global Policy & Advocacy Division is the Global Education Program. The goal of the Global Education Program aligns cohesively with many of the other health and development programming sectors of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Indeed, The Gates Foundation cites statistics from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Policy Paper 32/Fact Sheet 44 titled "Reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education" to illuminate the strides made in global education. The UIS Policy Paper indicates "tremendous progress over the past 15 years: The number of primary-aged children out of school has been cut almost in half, and more than 90% of primary-aged students are in school" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). A key success is the fact that "girls are attending schools in increasing numbers, and the gender parity index has improved" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The statistics suggest significant inroads for education initiatives. However, more work remains.

In addition to creating access to attend schools, the Gates Foundation recognizes that attending school and actually learning are not the same. To wit, "in many...low and lower-middle income countries, fewer than one in three students is proficient in reading, and fewer than two in five are proficient in mathematics" (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, &

Golston, 1999-2019). The literacy rate is particularly troubling because “studies show that students who cannot read by third grade fall behind, often with no opportunity to catch up” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). Thus, the goal of the Global Education Program is to “provide education systems around the world with better information, evidence, tools and approaches that can help improve primary and secondary education, with an emphasis on foundational learning in primary grades” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The Gates Foundation views its educational programming as a pivotal investment in the future that will yield sustainable, long-term results that will improve individuals’ lives and communities at large (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

To meet the Global Education Program’s goals, the Gates Foundation teams with other groups working to meet the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 4, which “seeks a quality education for all children” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The strategy to meet Goal 4 involves two critical skills—listening to and learning from a variety of valuable stakeholders. The Gates Foundation and its partners listened to and learned “from several dozen people deeply engaged in education around the world—students, teachers, academics, bureaucrats, non-governmental organizations, multilateral partners, parents, entrepreneurs, and those working at the global level” to best understand where both gaps and opportunities existed to make meaningful contributions. As a result, the Gates Foundation committed \$68 million over four years to support education and learning systems and institutions with resources including “better information, evidence, tools, and approaches that can help improve primary and secondary education, with an emphasis on foundational learning in primary grades”

(Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019).

The Gates Foundation primarily works on direct programming activities in India and a few Sub-Saharan Africa countries but expects the resources, objectives and outputs will draw attention and interest from other geographic locations. Moreover, the Gates Foundation acknowledges, “We are not undertaking this work alone. We are working with a range of partners to make the biggest impact possible for people who need it most” (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). In order to make the “biggest impact” the Gates Foundation’s efforts are centered around four pillars: Building Global Action in Learning; Helping Countries Advance Education Equality; Identifying Cost-Effective Approaches to Classroom Instruction and Learning; and, Understanding Barriers, specifically to girls’ participation in secondary education (Mundel, Elias, Voorhies, & Golston, 1999-2019). The four pillars are designed to support the overall purpose of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal.

### **Setbacks and Failures**

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has undeniably made noteworthy advances and contributions to reduce global inequity since its inception twenty years ago. Success stories can be found in each of the five major programming divisions and, generally, within each of the various sectors that combine under the headings of Global Health, Global Development, Global Growth & Opportunity, U.S. Program, and Global Policy & Advocacy. Many of the positive outcomes have been a result of the Gates Foundation’s ability and willingness to “swing for the fences” in ways that governments, elected officials, businesses, and other nonprofit organizations cannot afford to risk. As Bill and Melinda Gates reflect in their 2020 Annual Letter, “Our role as philanthropists is not only

to take risks that support innovation but to work with our partners to overcome the challenges of scale in delivering it. We believe that progress should benefit everyone, everywhere.” Nonetheless equally as significant and rife with lessons, is the fact that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has faced delays and obstacles, some of which might be considered outright failures.

For the Gates Foundation, the ongoing mission to reduce global inequity demands learning from the failures and pivot points to refocus and reattack the systemic conditions that permit and perpetuate conditions of inequity to exist. As Bill Gates himself notes, altogether, our foundation has spent \$53.8 billion over the last 20 years. On the whole, we’re thrilled with what it’s accomplished. But has every dollar we’ve spent had the effect we’ve hoped for? No. We’ve had our share of disappointments, setbacks, and surprises. We think it’s important to be transparent about our failures as well as our successes—and it’s important to share what we’ve learned (Gates & Gates, 2020).

Just as the numerous positive outcomes and programmatic efforts can be scaled, so too, can the lessons gleaned by the Gates Foundation’s failures to prevent other global organizations, both for- and nonprofit, from making the same mistakes and suffering similar negative outcomes.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation currently operates as the largest philanthropic foundation worldwide, both financially and in scope (McGoey, 2014, p. 109). Thus, the Gates Foundation generates tremendous impact while also building powerful influence because “no area of global development [exists] that is not affected by Gates Foundation policies” (McGoey, 2014, p. 110). The weight of the Gates Foundation

is expressed in various ways. McGoey (2014) explains, "...whether through direct grants, or through the indirect impact of efforts by foundation staff to rally governments and non-governmental actors to fund causes which the foundation aims to prioritise [*sic*]" (p. 110) The Gates Foundation flexes its influence through funding, partnerships, the ability to convene experts and ideas, and in the sheer number of programs and employees worldwide. The sheer scale and reach of the Gates Foundation command criticism and questions about agenda-setting and undue power. In large part, the questions that push back against the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation do not revolve around the notion of doing good works to help others in the fight against global inequities, but in the ways the world's largest foundation builds, directs and monitors its influence to shape global policies and organizations.

First, the setbacks in Global Health, specifically programming to reduce and eradicate human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), malaria, and polio will be explored. Next, discussion will turn to the setbacks and failures of educational programming initiatives in the U.S. Program, particularly the Common Core Standards and the Effective Teacher Initiative. Ultimately, the Gates Foundation has faced harsh academic and marketplace criticisms about the results of its strategic programs and partnerships, unfair financial allocations that potentially garner favor and influence, and questions about accountability and overall control. In short, the Gates Foundation does not always get it right. Importantly, Bill and Melinda Gates admit that fact.

#### *Global Health Setbacks: HIV, Malaria, and Polio*

Global Health was one of first priorities when Bill and Melinda Gates created their eponymous foundation. As of 2014, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has spent

more annually on global health initiatives than the World Health Organization (WHO) and is WHO's second-largest annual contributor after the United States (McGoey, 2014, pp. 109-110). The Gates Foundation also significantly funds other global health organizations, including those connected to the United Nations, World Bank and agencies like the Global Fund (McGoey, 2014). Remarkably, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation even outspends most countries in its global health programming (McGoey, 2014, pp. 109-110).

One of the first health issues the Gates Foundation sought to combat was the spread of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). In 2002, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation played a critical role in the launch of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Gates & Gates 2020; Philanthropy News Digest, 2020). Initially, the Gates Foundation's strategy involved the development and distribution of drug therapies that needed to be taken on a daily basis. Delivering the drugs to local health programs in low- and middle-income countries proved problematic, and the drugs themselves were proved to be ineffective in the fight to prevent HIV transmission (Philanthropy News Digest, 2020). Bill & Melinda Gates admitted mistakes early in the Foundation's HIV work in the 2020 Annual Letter. They also discussed the pivot to seek long-lasting solutions like non-daily drug therapies, injections and implants, and preventative measures that can be implemented in the areas that are most at need (Philanthropy News Digest, 2020).

Remarkably, the experiences with HIV treatment and prevention yielded another powerful realization. As Bill and Melinda Gates note, "Our response also needs to reflect what matters to people, what's keeping them from seeking prevention and treatment



services, and why the tools that prove effective in clinical trials don't always make a difference in the context of their everyday lives" (Gates & Gates, 2020). Other issues the Gates Foundation has realized it must also tackle to combat the spread of HIV include poverty, gender discriminations and inequities, stigmas, and violence (Philanthropy News Digest, 2020). In essence, the Gates Foundation was forced to retool and reframe its strategies in HIV to better meet the needs of those who suffer from the disease and those working to help treat and prevent transmission.

A second health-related issue that continues to be a worthy foe for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is malaria. As part of the larger Global Health Division, work toward malaria eradication is accomplished in combination with partners, specifically the WHO and Global Fund. Initially, the joint efforts of the Gates Foundation and its partners led to a decline in annual deaths and an increase in successful treatment options (Hignett, 2018). After the early successes, however, the numbers began to move and change for the worse. As a result, Bill Gates announced during the London Malaria Summit in 2018 that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation would pledge an additional \$1 billion financial commitment to fight malaria and called on global leaders to unite against the disease (Hignett, 2018). Gates described the fight against malaria as being at "crossroads" and pointed at myriad factors causing the uptick in global malaria-related deaths.

The major factors contributing to the "crossroads" include a decline in drug therapy production and distribution, lack of preventative netting production and distribution, an increase in insecticide resistance, a breakdown in donor awareness and funding, and a break from vital government partners who have turned attention to other

issues and diseases (Hignett, 2018). In April 2019, the Gavi Alliance, in collaboration with The Global Fund and Unitaid, all three of whom are heavily funded partnerships with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, announced the creation of new malaria vaccine pilot programs in Malawi, Kenya, and Ghana. The fight against malaria remains ongoing.

The third health and disease-related setback is in the work to eradicate polio. In 2009, Bill Gates and WHO officials met to discuss the return on Gates's \$700 million investment to eradicate the disease; the news was grim (Guth, 2010). A devastating outbreak spread across Africa that summer and into the fall, and Nigeria was particularly hard hit (Guth, 2010). When faced with the failure and losses—both in human lives and financial investment—Gates famously asked, “so, what do we do next?” (Guth, 2010; Lebowitz, 2019).

The Gates Foundation, in collaboration with the WHO and other international agencies, immediately reevaluated the polio strategy and refocused on tackling not just the disease itself, but also the conditions that permit the disease to run rampant, especially in Africa and Southeast Asia (Guth, 2010; Lebowitz, 2019). The new strategy was designed to execute a holistic approach, namely boosting overall healthcare systems in countries afflicted by polio, malaria and other deadly diseases, as well as additional research and work on vaccines and emergency response centers in the hardest-hit nations (Guth, 2010; Lebowitz, 2019). As a result, the number of polio cases reported by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative decreased to a scant 31 cases by 2018 (Guth, 2010; Lebowitz, 2019). In October 2019, the WHO announced a new polio outbreak in The Philippines (WHO 2019; Gutierrez, 2019). Prior to that time, The Philippines had not

had a reported case in seventeen years (WHO 2019; Gutierrez, 2019). The work to eradicate polio remains ongoing.

*Education Setbacks: Common Core Standards and Effective Teacher Initiative*

In their 2020 Annual Letter reflecting on the first twenty years of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, founders Bill and Melinda Gates note, “If you’d asked us 20 years ago, we would have guessed that global health would be our foundation’s riskiest work, and our U.S. education work would be our surest bet. In fact, it has turned out just the opposite.” Indeed, the work on education reform in the United States has proven to be anything but a sure thing.

Bill Gates is a strong proponent of small schools, ideally those with less than 500 students (*The Los Angeles Times* Editorial Board, 2016; Strauss, 2016). His education reform ideas were first put into practice in 1999 when the Gates Foundation pledged a gift of up to \$100 million to the Hillsborough County, Florida school system with the goal “to fund bonuses for high-performing teachers, to revamp teacher evaluations and to fire the lowest-performing 5%” (*The Los Angeles Times* Editorial Board, 2016). The school district committed to match the funds 100%. Just a few short years later, reports in *The Tampa Bay Times* suggested the Gates Foundation had withdrawn financial backing short of the initial \$100 million pledge (by backbreaking \$20 million). The program costs inflated far beyond expected expense projections, and the schools were faced with a high debt burden (*The Los Angeles Times* Editorial Board, 2016). In addition, the low-income schools appear to be left with the least-experienced teachers (*The Los Angeles Times* Editorial Board, 2016). Ultimately, the program, evaluation

system and all supporting components were completely removed from the school system that was left in dire financial straits.

Then, in June 2016, editorials in *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* both condemned an annual letter written by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's then-CEO Sue Desmond-Hellman where she touted the Foundation's noteworthy successes. However, as both opinion pieces noted, the tone from Desmond-Hellman shifted when she wrote about public education in the United States. Described by the editorial authors as "chastened" and with the realization that "oops, the job is harder than its leaders thought," Desmond-Hellman admitted that "we're facing the fact that it is a real struggle to make systemwide change...[and,] it is really tough to create more great public schools" (*The Los Angeles Times* Editorial Board, 2016; Strauss, 2016). In both op-ed pieces, the authors highlight various educational programming failures and shortcomings the Gates Foundation had incurred.

Chief among the 2016 criticisms for the Gates Foundation's educational initiatives was the Common Core curriculum standards. The Gates Foundation financially supported the Common Core curriculum and utilized its leaders' powerful influences to sway political favor for adoption. (*The Los Angeles Times* Editorial Board, 2016; Strauss, 2016). The Common Core standards were then deployed to various states and education departments around the United States. The problem, though, was the Gates Foundation did not listen to warnings about the quick rollout and adoption, and the resulting lack of teacher training and resources. *The Los Angeles Times'* Editorial Board (2016) reported, "the too-quick introduction of Common Core and attempts in many states to hold schools and teachers immediately accountable for a very different form of

teaching, led to public backlash.” The backlash emanated from a variety of stakeholder audiences, including teachers, principals, administrators, and parents.

Similarly, another 2016 op-ed piece published by *The Washington Post* condemned the Gates Foundation’s educational programming initiatives as an experimentation. Strauss (2016) wrote, “The foundation was essentially using its vast resources to experiment in education – and when it found that one experiment didn’t work, it went to another” (Strauss, 2016). Of the 46 states that initially adopted the Common Core curriculum, 16 states have passed legislation, or are in the process of doing so, to repeal the curriculum (World Population Review, 2020).

In June 2018, the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis, released an evaluation report largely blasting the Gates Foundation and its Effective Teacher Initiative that was launched nearly a decade prior (Stecher, et al., 2018; Hess, 2018). The Effective Teacher Initiative was described as a costly, overzealous reform that failed to achieve goals and even had a negative impact in many of the programming areas it was designed to address and improve (Stecher, et al., 2018; Hess, 2018). Moreover, students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and education reform activists decried both Common Core standards and the Effective Teacher Initiative as detrimental to learning and achievement, both for students and overall school systems.

The Effective Teacher Initiative was estimated to cost participating schools \$575 million from 2009-2016 and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged \$212 million in support. The project amount did not include projections for staff time needed to conduct the annual reviews at a cost of an additional \$73 million per year (Stecher, et al.,

2018; Hess, 2018). What's more, the Effective Teacher Initiative did not reflect progress in the areas of student achievement, graduation rates, and low-income and minority education reforms (Stecher, et al., 2018; Hess, 2018). The RAND report ultimately concluded "the initiative did not achieve its goals..." (2018).

The Effective Teacher Initiative did yield some lessons, but those lessons were gleaned from its failure. A senior education contributor from *Forbes Magazine* helpfully compiled a list of five lessons to be gleaned: the reforms demanded too much time; big investments in new evaluation systems did not yield meaningful change; the new systems did not help attract professional talent; little bonuses do not induce educators to make big changes; and teacher evaluations are still valuable (Hess 2018). The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has yet to develop an alternative to the Effective Teacher Initiative, and many states have been left to create their own alternatives and reforms.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has faced harsh criticisms and public failures, mostly in its global health and domestic education initiatives. While they still describe themselves as "impatient optimists," Bill and Melinda Gates acknowledge the shortcomings and setbacks, especially in education. They explain, "The fact that progress has been harder to achieve than we hoped is no reason to give up, though. Just the opposite. We believe the risk of not doing everything we can to help students reach their full potential is much, much greater" (Gates & Gates, 2020). Perhaps the greatest outcome or lesson is the simple fact that there is still much work to do in global health, education reform, and myriad other programming sectors. Moreover, the Gates Foundation must listen carefully and draw from the insights and advice of its on-site

strategic partners as they collaborate to reduce inequity and improve the quality of life so that all human beings have equal opportunities to live and thrive.

## **Conclusion**

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has executed a remarkable number of programs in five unique, influential divisions over its first twenty years. While the Gates Foundation has enjoyed great success as the exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action, it has also been subject to severe criticisms in the media and academia. The ideas, solutions and practices are far from perfect, but it is undeniable that real, positive changes have taken place.

Moreover, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is embarking on a new decade of programming efforts. Thus, Bill and Melinda Gates have identified two new global issues that they believe demand attention as part of the foundation's future work. The Gates Foundation's agenda and portfolio of programming activities will now specifically include efforts to address global climate change and the battle for gender equality. These two new pathways reflect emerging interests that Bill and Melinda Gates personally believe must be addressed if the Gates Foundation is to fulfill its mission to reduce global inequities because all lives have equal value.

Finally, Bill and Melinda Gates reinforced their commitment to creating global change and learning from setbacks and failures in the conclusion to the 2020 Annual Letter. They remind readers, partners, and other stakeholders of the mission that drives their collective work to reduce global inequity because "...That's why we've been at this work for the last two decades. And that's why we hope to continue it for many decades ahead." The victories (and failures) will fuel the Gates Foundation's ongoing work into

the next decades.

Each of the chapters included in this project was intended to show the progression of philanthropy from its earliest Classical roots in Greek tragedy, through various iterations of charity and giving, to the marketplace practices of corporate social responsibility, and finally, the contemporary elevation to philanthrocapitalism.

Philanthropy has taken place since Prometheus first gave man fire and continues on a global scale via today's large-scale foundations, the hallmark of philanthrocapitalism in action. Over the past twenty years, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has emerged as the exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action and demonstrates the elevation of traditional notions of corporate social responsibility to enact and catalyze transformative changes on a global scale. Furthermore, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with its philanthrocapitalist leaders at the helm and its vast network of partners, demonstrates the global impact a nonprofit foundation can create when boundless financial capital and social network resources are maximized and actionized.

Embedding this project in the historical moment of the Age of Transcendence attends to the social, economic, political and cultural conditions that permit, some might argue demand, the emergence of philanthrocapitalism as a new paradigm. In addition, philanthrocapitalism situated within corporate communication provides a framework to better understand philanthrocapitalism as an elevation of traditional corporate social responsibility practices. A key distinction of the elevation of corporate social responsibility to philanthrocapitalism is the potential to create large-scale global impact.

In addition, the basic tenets of corporate communication rooted in the careful balance of managing an organization's identity and image, fostering and leveraging



valuable stakeholder relationships, and ultimately building, protecting and maintaining a positive brand and reputation are the lifeblood that pumps through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. An organization must not only espouse its mission, values and vision, but it must actionize those organizational cornerstones into practices that communicate the internal and external organizational brand elements cohesively and consistently. Thus, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation not only functions as the paradigmatic exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action, but also aligns with the communicative guideposts of corporate communication.

Additionally, drawing on the work of Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action as a philosophical framework provides a hermeneutic entrance to understand how the exchange of speech acts utilizing rational validity claims can lead to consensus and a shared sense of meaning that calls forth mutually agreed-upon actions in the public sphere. The theory of communicative action is executed in the public sphere and global marketplace daily. Yet, the theory of communicative action proves to be of particular value for nonprofit organizations who must collectively align valuable resources and cultivate partnerships to execute programming that will fulfill an organizational mission and vision, often with results and implications to make the world a better place in some way.

Furthermore, human agents must work together communicatively to build consensus and actionize agreed upon steps, or programming, in ways that are meaningful to a shared worldview that does not impose or pursue homogeneity. Thus, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with its guiding mission to reduce inequity and belief that all lives have equal value, also demonstrates the power of Habermas's theory of

communicative action in practice.

Moreover, the project textures Habermas's theory of communicative action by incorporating the work of Judith Butler to understand performative agency. While the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation builds relationships and executes programming through communicative action that emerges from rational consensus and sense-making, it is through Butler's work on performative agency that The Gates Foundation is understood as the performative exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action. Both scholars' works help to elucidate the ways philanthrocapitalism can function discursively and as a marketplace practice that can be shaped and shared by others.

Fundamentally, the project contributes to the corpus of corporate communication scholarship by highlighting the communicative value of philanthrocapitalism in the public sphere as an elevation of traditional corporate social responsibility theory and practices. The importance of human agents discursively exchanging ideas as validity claims to arrive at an agreed-upon consensus drives the emergence of a rationally derived shared sense of meaning in the public sphere.

Drawing on Habermas and Butler to understand the communicative and performative implications of human agency and philanthrocapitalism in action, exemplified by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, delivers a praxis orientation that can be helpful to both corporate communication scholars and practitioners. The shared sense of meaning that compels action in the public sphere, particularly for nonprofit foundations, cannot be overstated. Through communicative action and consensus, shared sense of meaning emerges in the public sphere that contributes to a worldview with the potential to parallel a nonprofit's organizational mission and values. The alignment of a

co-created worldview, or shared sense of meaning and purpose, with a nonprofit organization's mission is the hallmark of what a unified vision of life and resources can accomplish via the good works of a nonprofit organization, particularly when paired with the defining characteristics of philanthrocapitalism.

Similarly, the alignment of internal and external organizational brand elements—identity and image—is seminal to corporate communication and effective nonprofit programming and execution. Nonprofit organizations, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, rely on consensus about mission, strategies and tactics to effectively actionize ideas to create change in the public sphere. The corporate communication discipline offers fertile ground for individuals and nonprofit organizations to coalesce around a shared sense of meaning and vision in the public sphere and to actionize programming that brings a shared vision to life through good works. Thus, the communication discipline is a rich soil for humans to connect and grow through communicative action and performative agency.

Finally, the project challenges the presupposed frameworks of corporate social responsibility and corporate communication by defying the limitations of what a nonprofit organization can accomplish. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation exceeds the culturally constructed categories and boundaries of a traditional nonprofit organization through its organizational structures, investment and grantmaking strategies, programming practices, strategic partnerships, and the sheer scope of efforts to catalyze transformative and sustainable changes on a global level. Moreover, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation also embraces the potential for programming to be scaled and adapted to better operate in unique localities for maximum impact.

When people with a shared vision can effectively draw on established coordinates, communicate, and collaborate to scale and execute programming strategies and tactics, the potential for widespread change is tremendous. Yet, nonprofit organizations must pursue change and enact programming cautiously, especially when the programming efforts are dispatched globally. Nonprofit organizations must take great care to balance influence and a desire to create change with listening and learning to prevent colonizing or inflicting a particular worldview. Similarly, nonprofit organizations and the people who execute programming must be vigilant against marginalizing others when adapting and scaling, and communicative leaders must look for opportunities to embrace and support difference in ways that are not colonizing or demeaning.

In summation, philanthrocapitalism is defined by the unique combination of social and financial capital, coordinated with entrepreneurial vision and the leveraging of effective partnerships to generate the greatest potential for widespread change. Philanthrocapitalism challenges previous notions and boundaries of traditional corporate social responsibility theory and practices and sparks robust change on a global level. Thus, philanthrocapitalism emerges as a powerful new paradigm that embraces the opportunity to catalyze transformative and sustainable changes on a global scale, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is the indisputable exemplar of philanthrocapitalism in action. Ultimately, its goal is to uplift others and open gateways of opportunity that will benefit us all.

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